The General Point of View as the Normative and Unifying Concept in Hume's *Treatise*

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Dedication

This dissertation is affectionately dedicated

to

Prof. Dr. Takashi Koizumi (1927-), *amicus Christi*.

献辞

この博士論文を敬愛する恩師、文学博士小泉仰先生に謹んで御捧げする。

Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation has been composed by myself, and that this dissertation is my own, and that this dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Naoki Yajima 矢嶋 直規

Dictum

Thus my object in applying my mind to politics is not to make any new or unheard of suggestions, but to establish by sound and conclusive reasoning, and to deduce from the real nature of man, nothing save the principles and institutions which accord best with practice. Moreover, in order to investigate the topics pertaining to this branch of knowledge with the same objectivity as we generally show in mathematical inquiries, I have taken great care to understand human actions, and not to deride, deplore, or denounce them. I have therefore regarded human passions like love, hate, anger, envy, pride, pity, and the other feelings that agitate the mind, not as vices of human nature, but as properties which belong to it in the same way as heat, cold, storm, thunder and the like belong to the nature of the atmosphere. Inconvenient though they be, such things are necessary properties; they have definite causes through which we try to understand their nature, and a true understanding of them gives the mind as much satisfaction as the apprehension of things pleasing to the senses.

Benedict de Spinoza, *TRACTATUS POLITICUS* I. iv.

Contents

Preface and Acknowledgements

The initial idea that has crystallised into this dissertation was born in my Master's dissertation, a comparative study between Hume and Kant that I completed under the direction of Prof. Dr. Takashi Koizumi at *Keio University*, Tokyo, in 1991. I argued that Hume and Kant have not just different moral theories but symmetrically opposite systems regarding central moral concepts. As Kant's system is indisputably centred on the concept of "Vernunft", I thought there might be a concept or a principle that unifies Hume's system. I considered the general point of view such a central concept because Hume employs it at the very crucial stage concerning moral judgment. Since then through many detour routes I have held fast to the concept of the "general point of view". Recent arguments among commentators concerning the general point of view fortified my conviction, although I was not quite happy with the view of other commentators.

My first and foremost thanks go to my supervisor, Dr. Jonathan Hearn. His extremely sensitive, patient and pertinent guidance has let my initial intuition take the shape of a PhD dissertation. His expertise on Scottish and political thought, and his warm encouragement were my unfailing support throughout the whole period of this project. I am also deeply grateful to my second supervisors. Prof. Russell Keat has given a lot of essential suggestions. I learned from him the example of academic conscience as much as critical thinking. I am equally thankful to Richard Gunn for a crucial hint at the early stage of this study. This dissertation is literally a product of many Socratic dialogues they engaged in with me in a Humean manner. For the past years, Hume has been an immense source of insight for me, and will remain so.

This dissertation had the fortune and honour of being examined by two world-renowned and highly respected Hume scholars from different fields, Prof. Simon Blackburn (Philosophy, Cambridge) and Dr. Nicholas Phillipson (History, Edinburgh). I am deeply grateful for their comments and encouragement.

This work would have been much more difficult without the help and kindness of many people. Most of all, Dr. John Glassford introduced me to the rich political implications of Scottish philosophy. My colleagues at *Keiwa College*, Prof. Allan Blondé and Mark Frank have kindly proofread almost all draft chapters. Dr. Ben Young encouraged me at a time of difficulties. His elaborate stylistic suggestions on chapters 2 and 4 were especially valuable.

I gratefully acknowledge many academic debts from Prof. Takashi Koizumi, Prof. Koichi Namiki, Prof. Tsuguo Tahara, Dr. Shigehiro Nagano, Dr. Kota Yamada, Prof. Hiromasa Mase, Prof. Shuzaburo Izumiya, Prof. Shoji Tanaka, Prof. Atsushi Tanaka, Dr. Vincent Hope, Prof. Edward Craig, Dr. J. E. J Altham, Prof. José Bermudez, Prof. M. A. Stewart, Prof. John Wright, Dr. Peter Kail at various stages of this study. This dissertation is also a product of multiple friendships, and happy memories of discussions with my friends are buried between lines of this dissertation. In this regard, I wish to say many thanks, especially, to Revd. Ernest Marvin, Gale Macleod, John & Michelle Glassford, Ben Young, Revd. Brian & Margaret Ringrose, Chiaki Kaneda, Dr. Akira Kaneko, Dr. Kazunobu Narita, Hisao Takagi, Nate Johnson, Dr. Yasushi Hayashi, Dr. Keith Breen, Dr. Andy Schaap, Dr. Ken Levy, Dr. Allyn Fives, Revd. Koji Obuchi, Revd. Masayoshi Shimada, Gregory Hadley, Dr. Savina Tropia, Revd. Brian & Margaret Ringrose, Dr. Takeshi Nakano, Dr. Hiroyuki Furuya, Craig Stewart, Thomas Moore and Revd. Masami & Yukko Ishida.

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Earlier and different versions of chapters below are partly published or presented in the following journals or conference papers.

Chapter 2; "Custom as the Humean Alternative to Locke's Abstract Ideas": unpublished paper delivered in *The 29th Hume Society Conference*, The Hume Society, Helsinki, 2002.

Chapter 3; "The Humean Concept of Belief and Causation; A Moral Reading", *Bulletin of Keiwa College*, no. 11, 2002, pp. 17-52.

Chapter 5, part 1; "Sympathy and Communication in Hume", *Bulletin of Keiwa College*, no. 13, 2004, pp. 33-49.

Chapter 5, part 2; "Hume's General Point of View and Smith's Impartial Spectator", a paper delivered in the Conference: *Scottish Enlightenment in its European Context*, The British Society for the History of Philosophy, Glasgow, 2001, revised and published as "Hume's General Point of View and Smith's Impartial Spectator", *Bulletin of Keiwa College*, no. 12, 2003, pp. 71-86. "Re-consideration of the Theory of Sympathy" in T. Koizumi (ed.), *Reception and Development of the Western Thoughts in Japan* (in Japanese), Tokyo: Keio University Press, 2002, pp. 109-31.

Chapter 6; "The Epistemological Foundation of Justice in Hobbes, Locke and Hume", *ICU Comparative Culture*, no. 36, 2004, pp. 1-31.

Chapter 7; "Justice and the Stability of Property in Hume", *Bulletin of Keiwa College*, no. 9, 2000, pp. 29-64.

Abstract

My dissertation attempts to read David Hume's "*A Treatise of Human Nature: an attempt of introducing an experimental method of reasoning into moral subjects*", as a consistent moral theory, by showing the underlying unity of the three Books of the *Treatise*. In particular, I argue that the concept of the "general point of view" plays a central role in unifying the *Treatise*, which in the final instance proves to be about normativity. Most of all, I clarify the parallel between Hume's epistemology and his moral theory. I attempt to present Hume's moral theory as what I call "a constructivism of perceptions".

I start by exploring Hume's epistemology and his concept of custom, fundamentally understood as a principle of stability. I clarify that custom consists in recognizing a particular perception in association with other resembling perceptions. I claim this is what it means to take the general point of view. I then show that custom is the basis of Hume's theory of causation, where the concept of custom plays the central role of embodying the general point of view. I show that because of the development of custom Hume's theory of causation is related to his theory of the perception of external bodies, which completes our perception of physical circumstances.

In the later chapters I argue that Hume's theory of sympathy should be understood as a principle of sociability that confers shared value on both possessions and human behaviour. I next explain Hume's theory of justice as a regulating principle of social interaction that centres on property as causation. I argue that justice exerts a binding force beyond personal interests because its normative force derives from the sense of stability acquired in physical perceptions. Then, I discuss Hume's theory of promise regulates future interaction between people. Finally, I show that because of the authority of custom, government is allowed to demand people's allegiance, just as an external body is required to stabilise causal perception.

My dissertation shows that the general point of view provides the foundation of morality by establishing a stable relationship between human beings and their circumstances: physical, psychological, moral, and political.

List of Abbreviations

Citations are based on *The Harvard System*, with author's name, year of publication, followed by page or chapter and section numbers as appropriate in parenthesis. However, following texts will be referred to with abbreviations below, followed by page number. In accordance with the general practice in Hume scholarship, the paginations of the *Treatise* and the *Enquiries* will be shown from two editions as indicated below.

T: David Hume (2000), *A Treatise of Human Nature*, David Fate Norton, David Fate, and Norton, Mary J. (eds.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, with Book, part, section, and paragraph number. Followed by page references to Hume, D. (1975), *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 2nd edn., L. A. Selby-Bigge and P. H. Nidditch (eds.), Oxford: Clarendon Press as "SBN".

Enquiries: David Hume (1978), *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principle of Morals*, 3rd edn., L. A. Selby-Bigge and P. H. Nidditch (eds.), Oxford: Clarendon Press.

EHU: David Hume (1999), *An enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, T. L. Beauchamp (ed.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, with section and paragraph number. Followed by page references to the "*Enquiries*", L. A. Selby-Bigge and P. H. Nidditch (eds.) (1978), Oxford: Clarendon Press) as "SBN".

EPM: David Hume (1999), *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, Beauchamp, T. L. (ed.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, with section and paragraph number. Followed by page references to Hume, D. (1978), "*Enquiries*", L. A. Selby-Bigge and P. H. Nidditch (eds.), Oxford: Clarendon Press as "SBN".

Essays: David Hume (1985), *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, E. F. Miller (ed.), Ind.: Liberty Classics, with page references. Abbreviations of the individual essays: "Essay-OC": Of Original Contract, "Essay-PO": Of Passive Obedience, "Essay-C": Of Commerce. Other essays are cited without abbreviation of these types.

DNR: David Hume (1991), *David Hume Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion in Focus*, S. Tweyman (ed.), London: Routledge, with page references.

Leviathan: Thomas Hobbes (1996), *Leviathan*, R. Tuck (ed.), Cambridge University Press, with page references.

Essay: John Locke (1975), *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, P. H. Nidditch (ed.), Oxford: Clarendon Press, with Book, chapter, and section number, or with page references as appropriate.

Two Treatises: John Locke (1963), *Two Treatises of Government*, P. Laslett (ed.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, with page references, or with chapter and section number as appropriate.

TMS: Adam Smith (1976), *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie (eds.), Oxford: Clarendon Press, with page references.

Introduction

My dissertation is an attempt to read David Hume's "*A Treatise of Human Nature* --- an attempt of introducing an experimental method into moral subjects ---" as a consistent moral theory. I attempt to show the consistency of three Books of the *Treatise*. In particular, I argue that the concept of the general point of view serves a central role to unify the *Treatise*. Hume's *Treatise* contains various kinds of theories such as epistemology, associative psychology, ethics, and political philosophy. Some of these are attracting the intense interest of many readers, while others are now more or less regarded as peripheral topics. The theory of causation has attracted the most attention, and Hume's moral theory is often viewed as only of historical interest. Commentators tend to treat the three Books separately; those who discuss Hume's causation rarely refer to his political theory, and *vice versa*.

Since Kemp Smith proposed the naturalistic reading of Hume's *Treatise* (Kemp Smith, 1905, 1941), several commentators have suggested that Hume's theory is systematic, and that Book 1 of the *Treatise* is consistent with his moral theory. Despite these general suggestions, we do not yet have a clear and thorough exposition of the moral significance of Hume's epistemology.[1] Yet, the general tendency of commentators' opinion shows that this assumption is not widely accepted. Therefore, this dissertation purports to provide a vigorous rehabilitation of the moral and political reading of the *Treatise*.

Most of all, my dissertation attempts to clarify the moral philosophical significance of Hume's epistemology developed in the *Treatise*. I also attempt to

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[1] Kemp Smith was right in his conviction that "it was through the gateway of morals that Hume entered into philosophy" but his conclusion was mistaken that "Books 2 and 3 of the *Treatise* are in date of the first composition prior to the working out of the doctrines dealt with in Book 1" (Kemp Smith, 1941: vi). Because morality was Hume's central concern, he dealt with the topics in Book 1 as moral philosophy. For evidence that Hume did not write Book 3 first, see Mossner 1980: 74.

clarify Hume's moral philosophy in comparison to, among others, Hobbes, Locke, and Smith. I thereby attempt to show that there is a perspective in their theories which shapes central assertions. The central feature of this dissertation is to pursue "the general point of view" as the core concept that, as I claim, consistently underlies the whole development of the *Treatise*. In the first instance, readers are advised to take it as a heuristic device for finding the consistency of the *Treatise*. If it is shown to be a genuine guide in understanding the *Treatise* to the end, then it proves to be a unifying and normative concept of the whole *Treatise*. Different topics in the *Treatise* do not mean that it is a collection of independent expositions; on the contrary, they prove to compose a single theory that explains human nature as the realm of morality. Many topics in Hume's *Treatise* are to be understood as the components that constitute morality. Each topic should be understood as inter-related with the other and as a preparation for the next development, which culminates in presenting the theory of political society.[2] Thus, it must be shown that the perception of the physical world serves in a way as the foundation of morality. In the final instance, it will be shown that the general point of view serves as the normative concept that sustains society, and that morality consists in establishing a stable relationship between human beings and their circumstances: physical, psychological, moral, and political.

In this introductory chapter I first outline the three Books of the *Treatise*. Next, I explain my method of exploring Hume's *Treatise* in comparison to Hobbes, Locke and Smith. Then, I introduce the philosophical problems that this dissertation will tackle. Finally, I show how the concept of the general point of view can provide an answer to these problems.

1. "*A Treatise of Human Nature*"

Is it possible to summarize Hume's whole philosophy in just five words? Yes! It is "a treatise of human nature". One should not trust commentators who have not

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[2] The story of Hume's Treatise has a parallel structure with that of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind*. Hume and Hegel have Spinoza as their common source. For book length arguments, see

pondered the meaning and significance of this fundamental point. Some seem to read the *Treatise* as though it were *A Treatise of Scepticism*. But, Hume's theory is a theory of human nature. It means that it is neither "an essay concerning human understanding", nor is it "a treatise concerning the principle of human knowledge" nor is it "critique of pure reason". Hence, I will explore Hume's argument as an exposition of "human nature". Let me hope that, at the end of the journey, we will have a better understanding of human nature with its significant implications.

As John Rawls once remarked, there is a considerable discrepancy among the understandings of Hume commentators (Rawls, 2000: 235-52). As most other great philosophers, Hume commentary requires special care in articulating the basic premises and nature of his argument. There are too many disagreements in even a basic reading of Hume for us to take it for granted that one version is shared by Hume scholars. Therefore, it is necessary to clarify the basic structure of the argument of the *Treatise*.

Hume's *Treatise* is separated into three Books. Usually it is understood that Book 1, "Of Understanding", deals with epistemology and metaphysics, Book 2 "Of Passions" deals with psychology, and Book 3 "Of Morals" deals with ethics and political philosophy. But it is important to understand that Hume discusses moral philosophy in all three Books. The common denominator in all three Books is the theory of perception. He seems to echo Hobbes's ordering of argument that discusses first objects, second humans, and third civil society. This indicates that Hume shares with Hobbes the intention of subverting the Aristotelian teleological system with a causal system, except that Hume does not understand the world by means of a mechanical model.

Hume declares at the beginning of each Book that he deals exclusively with perceptions as the only material of mind. Hume's *Treatise* describes the development that those perceptions create by associating with each other. The Human mind is the theatre in which all of those associations take place. It is illuminating to think that Hume transforms the Hobbesian theory of a development of physical motion into a

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Berry, 1982; Pompa, 1990.

theory of the development of perceptions. Both similarly explain the creation of the human world which includes physical circumstances, psychological interaction, and moral institutions. It is a fundamental project of Hume's *Treatise* to transform the traditional natural law theories centring on reason into an empirical theory (Haakonssen, 1990: 61-85). In this connection, it is crucial to bear in mind that Hume learned, criticised and modified the theories of among others Cicero, Spinoza, and Locke, apart from Hobbes. This requires two steps. The first step is to humanise nature. Hume does this task by showing that perceptions, which are human qualities, are the foundation of the understanding of nature. And the second step is to show that morality can be elucidated in the same manner as the understanding of nature. Hume demonstrates that nature provides human beings with a paradigm of normativity by internalising normative rules. This is the situation which is usually understood as "adaptation". In this way, human beings can escape from the direct and complete rule of being moved by natural forces.[3]

As the central notion of normativity established in Book 1, "custom", whose crucial function is to associate particular impressions with other similar impressions plays a significant role. The association of impressions with past experiences enables human beings to acquire belief in the qualities of an object. Because of those beliefs, they can establish a stable pattern of behaviour recognised as custom. Book 1 culminates in establishing the perceptions of external objects.[4] When we recognise external objects, it signifies the end of the development of the perceptions of nature, because our perceptions can go no farther than the recognition of external objects. Thus, the common picture of the universe is a space composed of independent objects. This also signifies the final stage of normativity provided by nature especially in a Baconian sense. Because independent objects are a given fact of nature, we must act with respect to their nature in order to cope well with them. Therefore, the central concept that composes the essence of this normativity is

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[3] This idea can be traced to the influence of the Stoics on Hume.

[4] As I argue in Chapter 4, Hume's theory of external bodies has a positive function in the development of his moral theory. The problem of self apparently has a negative function in the theory of morality, because one of Hume's central targets is to criticise the moral theory based on the individuals. However, full discussion of the significance of self is not the purpose of this dissertation.

objectivity, whose significant ramifications include the concept of stability. It is extremely intriguing that in his theory of "external body" Hume implies the recognition of human being as its ultimate example.

While in Book 1, Hume explains the concept of order based on the impressions of sensations, in Book 2, he explains an order based on the impression of reflection. This signifies a change of stages of human activities from natural circumstances to social circumstances. In Book 1, however, there are yet no human beings with emotion, or in relationship with each other. Human relationships are the central concern in Book 2. Because passions are the impressions of reflection, there is an impression of sensation involved in the creation of human relationships. Here is an explanation of how commodities, or properties come to assume value and enter into the human world. Hume sensitively explains how human beings create the evaluation of other people and also of oneself via the passions which arise from the objects that belong to the person. This is described in his theory of sympathy, which explains the basic orientation of our social and moral activities. In short, Hume considers that because our self-evaluation is based on the impression of how other people feel about our properties and behaviours, human beings strive to obtain good commodities and good reputations. As is well known, this theory inspired Adam Smith's theories of moral sentiments and of economics.

Though Book 2 explains the principle of communication and sociability, which is the animating force for society, this force alone cannot create society. Society cannot be made orderly and sustained without the principle that regulates its formation. This is the general problem that Hume tackles in Book 3 of the *Treatise*. At the beginning of Book 3, Hume indicates the fundamental task of the discussion of morals: how to make moral distinctions, whether by reason or by sentiment. It is no wonder Hume denies the role of reason in making moral judgement, as he argued the limitation of the faculty of reason so much in Book 1. Hume argues that moral distinction is not based on reason but on moral sentiment. Then in the discussion of justice, Hume strategically poses a related problem namely: on which sentiment is the perception of justice based? This shows the same pattern of argument he makes in his discussion of causation, where Hume claims there is no impression that corresponds to cause. Thus he calls justice an artificial virtue, which means a product

of human nature similar to the creation of causation. As he finds custom a solution in his theory of causation, so Hume finds convention which is a counter concept of custom a solution in his discussion of morality. In this way, he establishes the stability of property as the first law of justice. He proceeds to show the necessity of the "transference of property" as the second law of justice. Hume shows promise-keeping as the third law of justice and as a foundation for establishing a system of law, which in turn explains the formation of society based on the division of labour and trade. Then, Hume discusses an allegiance to the government as a requirement to sustain justice and to engage in large-scale cooperative schemes. After discussing justice, Hume devotes the rest of Book 3 to the discussion of natural virtue, which should be possible within the framework of justice and is necessary to sustain and develop the good life of the people. In this way, Hume's *Treatise* culminates in the creation of morality as the final produce of the development of human nature.

2. Hobbes, Locke, and Smith

My dissertation attempts to explore Hume's theory in the context of British philosophy of his day. I understand Hume's *Treatise* fundamentally as a moral and political philosophy. This means that the *Treatise* has a political agenda that is deeply related to the political problems that his predecessors tackled through their philosophy. In this sense, Hobbes and Locke are special figures for Hume. Hobbes contemplates how to create a stable civil society, and Locke contemplates how to create free society, and in this context, Hume contemplates how to create a stable, free, and commercial society.[5]

Also, the *Treatise* itself is a product of Hume's intense study of philosophy from Presocratics to his contemporaries. Among others, he is a devoted Ciceronian (Jones, 1982: *passim*). It is well known that he, as well as Hobbes and Locke, has a strong French connection. However, in my dissertation I deliberately consider his British connections, because Hume's purpose is to propose a theory that sustains and develops the new Britain, which had just reunited with Scotland at that time. When

[5] Spinoza also shares a similar problem (cf. Steven, 1997: *passim*).

studying Hume it is absolutely necessary to bear in mind the political situation of his time, which included, among others the Jacobite Rising (cf. Phillipson, 1989: Ch. 2; Hearn, 2000: *passim*).[6]

In this dissertation, I will pay particular attention to Hume's connections with Thomas Hobbes, John Locke before him, and his contemporary, Adam Smith. Hume's enterprise was triggered because he discovered something different from the writings of his predecessors. For our purpose, comparison with Hobbes and Locke is crucial in order to identify the originality of Hume's moral philosophy. Also, it is impossible not to consider the understanding of his best and most talented friend Adam Smith who constructed a different system in response to Hume, because comparison with Smith provides a convenient means to learn the most characteristic achievement of Hume. Let us briefly examine each of them in turn.

Hume has a strong sympathy with the Baconian experimental method. Most of all, in Hume's explanation of justice, he adopts the Hobbesian approach of considering the genesis of justice, though not as a thought experiment as in Hobbes but as a natural course of human nature. Hobbes and Hume share the same idea that justice is what differentiates a civil society from the state of nature. There is an intriguing similarity between Hume's designation of the "artificial virtue" of justice and Hobbes's sovereign as an "artificial person" (cf. Russell, 1985: 51-64). In this respect, they are different from Locke and other natural law philosophers. I will show that Hume's task is to transform Hobbes's description of civil society as a dynamic mechanism into an organism of perception. Hobbes explained the formation of civil society based on the movement of, ultimately, atoms, and applies the same method in explaining the moral world and the physical world. However, the result is that he presents the moral world as the physical world. It is still an external object for human beings, and not yet the "human world".

Locke plays an essential role for producing the *Treatise*. It is true that he and Hume have a different orientation in theorising. Reason is the key concept of Locke's philosophy, since a fundamental part of his task is to transform Cartesian

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[6] In a different sense from Hobbes and Locke, Hume was very aware of the ephemerality of

philosophy into an empiricist system. On the other hand, Hume's principal concept is custom. Hume criticises the Lockean concept of abstract ideas, which proves to be a cornerstone of Locke's entire theory. Hume's disagreement with Locke characterises the difference between them. In sum it is safe to say that there is no major topic in Hume's epistemology that is not theorised in critical dialogue with Locke's *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, and *Two Treatises of Government*. As Hume himself makes substantial references to Locke, one cannot refer to Locke too often in discussing Hume.[7] Most of all, they share the strong interests in such concepts as idea, quality, power, causation, belief, and liberty.

Locke's political theory and especially his social contract theory are the central targets of Hume's theory of justice. Though Locke attempts to found government on the consent of people, Hume reconceives the foundation of political society as a development of convention. Hume considers that the Lockean foundation of reason does not explain the creation of morality. He has a similar dissatisfaction with Locke's explanation as he has with Hobbes; Locke's explanation of morality is based on reason which fabricates an abstract world, and not on human nature. Therefore, Hume is aware that Locke's theory of a political society is not synonymous with a theory of a moral world. Political society needs a moral foundation to be sustained and developed, which is possible only when that political society is founded on morality. Hume shows that human nature is the most comprehensive foundation of morality. This is why Hume starts discussing the perception of the physical world before he elucidates an understanding of the moral world.

Adam Smith is a peculiar presence for Hume. He is the most significant witness of Hume's philosophy and real life. As a great philosopher himself, Smith inherits two very central concepts from Hume; one is "sympathy", and the other is the "spectator" (cf. Phillipson, 1983: 179-202; Raphael, 1975: 87).[8] Smith takes note

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government born shortly after the Union of 1707.

[7] Locke's name is referred four times the *Treatise*.

[8] Peter Jones points out that Cicero "emphasises the importance of seeing ourselves from a spectator's viewpoint" (Jones, 1982: 41). It is arguable that Hume derives the notion of general point of view from the Epicurean and Stoic criteria of truth: *proplepsis* (preconception), *physike*

of Hume's general point of view, which he develops into his "impartial spectator". As I attempt to show that the general point of view vindicates the consistency of Hume's system, it is significantly encouraging that Smith notes it as so core a concept in Hume that he adopts it as a core concept of his own system. Smith does not accept it as Hume conceives it, but adapts it to his own system. This means that we can understand the Humean general point of view by comparing it with Smith's impartial spectator. The difference between them, however, is reflected in their understanding of "sympathy". I will argue in chapter 5 that this difference derives from their different understandings of order.

Smith's theory is a theory of moral judgement, while Hume's is a theory of human nature. Smith deals with notions of the good and the bad that stand outside the causal order, but for Hume approval and disapproval are causal interactions that create reality, not an ideal. In comparison with Smith, the formative nature of Hume's moral theory becomes more apparent. This corresponds to the fact that Hume bases his theory of morals on an epistemology in which perceptions are the only material. The true significance of Hume's moral theory is presented in his epistemology. Smith does not have an epistemology that replaces Hume's system. Therefore, if we understand the comprehensive implications of the Humean epistemology, it enables us to understand the real difference between Hume and Smith.

Beside Hobbes, Locke, and Smith, there is another philosopher to refer to in order to understand the *Treatise*. It is the author of, among other works, the *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* and *An Enquiry concerning the Principle of Morals*, David Hume himself. After the well-known disappointment regarding the reception of the *Treatise*, Hume published the *Enquiries*. I recognise these are different works. But I do not support the view that because the *Enquiries* are written after the *Treatise*, the *Enquiries* better represent Hume's true theory (Strawson, 1989: 8). Nor do I support the view that since Hume denies the *Treatise* at the end of his

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ennoia (natural conception), and especially *koine ennoia* (common conception). These concepts are common heritage to all the later epistemological development of Western philosophy. Hume, however, criticises the "enlarged views" (EPM 8.19; SBN 101) of the Stoics (cf. Long, 1974: *passim*; Striker, 1996: Ch. 3).

career, the *Treatise* is worthless. Instead, this dissertation attempts to elucidate the theory that I find worth consideration in the *Treatise*.

The *Enquiries* are organised thematically, which is shown in their full titles: *An Enquiry of Human Understanding*, and *An Enquiry of the Principles of Morals*. Thus the two *Enquiries* are independent of each other, unlike the systematic treatment of perceptions in the *Treatise*. Moreover, in the second *Enquiry*, Hume explicitly concentrates on the "principles" of morals, presuming the concept of "morals" that he explores in the *Treatise*. While, there is no doubt that the *Enquiries* can serve as the best commentary for understanding the *Treatise*, my purpose is to demonstrate the general point of view as the kernel concept in the systematic development of the *Treatise*, which disappears in the *Enquiries*, though we find ample examples of equivalent notions in it as well.

Hume explains the development of the object of perceptions from the most primitive impressions into the political society. Hume demonstrates how perception progresses from a primitive unit, through association, custom, causation, external object, and interaction of people, to the formation of society. All of these are connected, and all of these stages of development are characterised by the general point of view, with each stage producing a particular type of association and causation. All of them are necessary for human life and all of them have to do with morals. And if these are all represented by the concept of the general point of view, this can be regarded as *the* normative principle in Hume.

3. Philosophical Problems in this Dissertation

In this section, I wish to clarify what philosophical points my dissertation attempts to establish. In his ambition of becoming the Newton of moral science, Hume intends to elucidate the fundamental principle of morality. Thus, Hume's theory is concerned with every element of moral theory; it is concerned with the concept of morality, the origin of morality, the function of morality, the consequence of morality, the institution of morality, and the standard of moral judgment. All of these are elucidated by a single principle in a systematic manner. Hume holds that the elucidation of human nature is enough to know everything about morality, because

there is no element of morality that is not related to human nature, and *vice versa*, there is no element of human nature that has nothing to do with morality, including and especially the perception of the natural world. This represents at once Hume's presupposition and his conclusion; by presenting a comprehensive moral theory on this premise, Hume can show the truth of his premise. Most essentially, Hume's theory is concerned with the foundation of morality, because Hume understands this is the central task of the moral philosophy. It is true that Hume's theory is not a prescriptive theory, because he thinks that morality just like natural science is not subject to human commandment; just as it does not make sense to prescribe a physical law that is not produced by nature, one cannot make a rational proposal about morality that does not originate from experiences in accordance with human nature. This is the fundamental implication of his criticism of a moral theory based on reason, or rational design.

Thematically, therefore, this dissertation is a study of the naturalistic foundation of morality. My claim that Book 1 is the basis of Hume's moral philosophy signifies, first of all, that custom is the foundation of morality. It is less controversial that there is a link on the one hand, between custom, causation and the idea of external objects, and on the other hand, between morality, justice, and political authority. In this connection, this dissertation will argue that custom is the foundation of morality, causation is the foundation of justice, and the idea of external objects is the foundation of government. By arguing these relations, it will be shown that Hume's *Treatise* as a whole signifies a moral philosophy.

In a fundamental sense, Hume inherits the tradition concerning natural law, and makes it fit into the unique framework of his theory of perceptions (cf. Forbes, 1975: Ch. 2). Most significantly, he considers that nature provides the initial sense of "normativity". Hume's profound assertion is that normativity emerges not as an ideal recognisable by reason, as many standard natural law theorists insist, but as a cause. In other words, people come to acquire the initial sense of obeying law or order positively. Hume takes this as the foundation of morality. Therefore, already in its very origin, morality is reduced to a causality that regulates human behaviour; Hume takes morality as a special kind of causation that applies to human relationships. Though in Book 1 he mostly takes up the impressions of sensation, Hume is neither

doing nor interested in a natural philosophy. On the contrary, his intention is to clarify how human beings internalise physical experience, or the manner of their interacting with their surroundings. Internalised experience is the only material for creating a human world.

Through the process of avoiding conflicts and promoting pleasure, human beings obtain the initial sense of learning and following the law in its most primitive sense. This provides the primitive but core sense of morality as the norm for men to follow which is to avoid pain and promote pleasure in the interactions with their fellow beings. In this fundamental manner, nature supplies the paradigm for human behaviour. Because there is only one human nature, human beings behave with the same capacity and principle both when they interact with natural circumstances and when they interact in human circumstances. The significance of morality is not conceptually acquired by reason, but given physically or experientially by nature. Also, it is incorrect to conceive that Hume's morality begins with any particular sentiment because sentiments do not occur in themselves without perceptions; perceptions of physical nature are the foundation of morality. Thus, Hume's epistemology is the foundation of his theory of both passion and morals. Therefore, rather than Book 2, Book 1 is the discussion of the development of the faculty of dealing with natural object that serves as the foundation of Hume's moral theory.

It is a common allegation that Hume's theory contains explanation but not justification (cf. Broils, 1964: Ch. 4). It is true that his theory of causation indicates that our causal belief has no rational justification. However, if rational justification is not the only kind of justification relevant for human behaviour, Hume's critics miss the point. Hume's theory of morality is committed to the problem of moral justification. This is shown in his persistent argument against founding morality by reason. As Donald Livingston convincingly argues, at the centre of Hume's philosophical enterprise comes the opposition between the "true philosophy" and the "false philosophy". So it is Hume's fundamental task to present the principle for distinguishing true belief from false belief, and thus the true moral belief from the false moral belief. Hume by no means asserts any belief can represent morality. His explanation of moral belief and moral judgment by implication signifies the standard for true moral belief. Morality is defined as attaining normativity. That there exists a

normativity means there can be a possibility of deviation, or the unjustifiable action that is accompanied by pain of some kind.

Thus, moral beliefs are justified when they serve the formation, stabilization, and development of human relations and social institutions in a manner similar to how human relations and the social institutions have been formed. Put conversely, justified beliefs are those that serve to form, stabilize, and develop human relationships. Thus, when an action functions in the manner of promoting or at least sustaining the stability of the whole situation, the action is justified. The moral value of an action is evaluated from the standpoint of the overall moral activities of human beings. However, Hume's position is different from political conservatism that asserts the status quo as the moral standard, because his theory positively prescribes the development of society and a moral system. His position is also different from utilitarianism which justifies the action that maximizes total utility by the society. Hume is decisively different from the utilitarians in the following point: unlike the utilitarianism, Hume by no means considers promoting the total utility as the end of morality. Morality for Hume is more concerned with the manner of human behaviour rather than with the final result of behaviour on society as a whole. No action is justifiable only because it produces the maximum amount of goods. Thus unlike utilitarianism, Humean morality is not a rational system.

More concretely, my dissertation tackles concepts and problems concerned with custom, belief, external objects, sympathy, property, justice, consent, promise, government, allegiance, order, and the like. These are key concepts that compose the moral system in the *Treatise*, that are also relevant in understanding morality by a naturalistic approach. In the first instance, it is possible to specify two of the most important concepts in the naturalistic explanation of morality in the *Treatise*. These are "custom" and "belief", which are the central topics in chapters 2 and 3. Of these two concepts, custom is more fundamental in that belief is a product of custom. Hume identifies himself as an heir of the Aristotelian tradition by positing the concept of custom as the basis of his moral theory. Custom dominates Hume's theory as it does our common life. Thus, he explains such important concepts as causation, or external objects by reference to the concept of custom. Moreover, in his social

theory, he modifies the concept of custom into convention, by which he explains justice.

It cannot be overstated that Hume takes morality as a particular kind of causation that controls human behaviour in the Newtonian universe (cf. Schneewind, 1998: 361). Morality is a natural phenomenon when it is considered as a particular cause of human behaviour. On the other hand, the causation of morality does not exist externally but exerts its power through the beliefs adopted by people. Hume understands that morality consists in the sense of necessity. The emergence of the sense of necessity is the most important concept that is explained by the theory of causation.

However, because Hume's moral theory is naturalistic, it is not apparent how it can accommodate the modality that is explained by reason, which is the problem of objectivity in chapter 4. It is important to clarify how Hume considers the manner judgment based on perceptions attains objectivity that is usually regarded as the condition of moral judgement. Regarding this problem, Hume's strategy is to anatomise the concept of objectivity to reveal its human significance, and explain the function the concept of objectivity plays in morality. I argue that the naturalistic meaning of the concept of objectivity that underlies Hume's discussion on the existence of external objects serves to elucidate this problem. Perception of external bodies is very important for morality, because it procures the initial concept of objectivity. Thus chapters 2 through 4 deal with epistemological topics in the *Treatise*.

Since objectivity is generally regarded as the ground of fairness, impartiality is another problematic concept in understanding Hume's moral theory, and is thus a central problem in chapter 5. This concept is concerned with his theory of sympathy, which is the principle that enables the communication of sentiments between people. Adam Smith develops it as the principle of moral judgment after Hume, claiming that sympathy of the impartial spectator represents propriety, and thus the standard of moral judgement. Intriguingly, Hume does not count impartiality as a condition for morality or moral judgment. For one thing, impartiality is not an empirical concept since there is no impression corresponding to impartiality; for another, Hume

understands that sympathy is the principle of partiality (cf. Gert, 1998: Ch.6). Thus, the problem is how it is possible that partiality rather than impartiality results in producing a moral quality. Instead of impartiality, and in compensation to the function that is expected of impartiality, Hume presents a concept of justice as an artificial device that can attain the effect of impartiality through the principle of partiality.

The elucidation of justice in connection to epistemology is another focus of my dissertation. In fact, providing a foundation for justice is a central task of every comprehensive moral philosophy. Adam Smith directly connects sympathy with moral judgment, and takes impartiality realised through sympathy as the condition of justice. Hume, on the other hand, denies the direct connection between the principle of justice and a morality based on sympathy. Thus justice is an artificial virtue in Hume. And because he alleges justice to be artificial, Hume provides an empirical foundation for justice. He needs to explain how moral behaviour is motivated by a principle not existing in nature, i.e. among animals. Hume's explanation of justice as an empirically based concept enables him to expel a non-empirical authority for justice. Justice is clearly considered as the artificial causation of regulating human behaviour and creating order in society. Because natural causation is based on human nature, justice as causation can also be based on human nature. He then explains the concept of consent and promise in continuity with the institution of justice founded on property relationships. In this way, his theory does not presume autonomous individuals who authorise the political authority by giving consent and making promises. This signifies a totally different kind of foundation from the social contract theories for political authority.

In accordance with his criticism of social contract theory, Hume needs to supply his own explanation of political authority. Therefore, the last major problem in this dissertation is the foundation of political authority. Hume's task is to give a natural foundation to political authority. Hume excludes God, power (violence), and reason as the origin of political authority. Morality is the only legitimate ground for people to obey the government. Now, as indicated above, justice means to obey a cause called the laws of justice. In Hume's epistemology, an external object is postulated as the common source of various causations, for it is unnatural for human

beings to have stable view of the world that there are causations where there is no object that issues them. In the same sense, the laws of justice, especially because they originate from custom, are ambiguous, and not complete unless there is a political authority presupposed as their source. Thus though the real origin of the laws of justice is convention, their formal parenthood is ascribed to the political authority.

It is no surprise that Hume regards both external objects and government as a fiction or invention. There can be only one source of law natural or artificial because there is only one manner people obey the law. In this way, Hume demolishes the dichotomy between nature and morality. Similarly, there is only one way to recognise an independent object as a source of law. Government has a similar manner of existence as an external object that exists independently of one's own perception. Therefore, Hume's theory of external objects prepares for the theory of government as the authority that issues the laws of justice. Hume argues that external existence is a fiction that is assumed by the working of the imagination. In nature, the belief in external objects, though it is a fiction, perfects the order of the physical world. Likewise, government, though it is a composition produced by people's allegiance, perfects the order of the moral world. Government is a perfection of human nature. In this way, Hume's *Treatise* proves to be a comprehensive moral theory, ranging from the perception of sensory experience to life in a political society. Thoroughly consistently, it is a theory of the creation of order based on the human nature.

Underlying all those expositions, there is an idea that can appropriately be called a Humean constructivism. Obviously this is contrasted with the famous counterpart, Kantian constructivism (cf. Rawls, 2000: 235-252; O'Neill, 1990: chap. 11). Kant's theory maintains that the pure categories of human understanding produce the recognition of objects, rather than the converse. Kant alleges that his idea is a Copernican turn in philosophy. Before Kant, however, Hume shows a clear consciousness of "Copernicus" as well as Newton (Cf. T 2.1.3.7; SBN 282).[9] In a nutshell, Humean constructivism means that imagination produces the belief in

objects through the material of perceptions. Humean constructivism provides a wider basis for political authority.

This is related to the so called "New Hume Debate" regarding a realist interpretation of Hume. The new Humeans assert that Hume is a sceptical realist who posits the reality of causal power and existence of external objects and only denies their right recognition. If my exposition in this dissertation is correct, it will not only lead to an understanding that is quite different from those who read Hume in this way, but it will also show the difference between Humean and Kantian moral theory.

4. The General Point of View as a Key to the Problems

Now we have previewed the philosophical problems and the basic line of arguments that this dissertation is ready to develop. Let me introduce the concept of the general point of view in connection to those arguments. Custom functions as a key concept to the elucidation of a naturalistic foundation of morality. Although custom has been recognised as the origin of ethics since Aristotle, Hume's innovative argument is that custom serves also as the principle of metaphysics. As there are no innate ideas, human beings have no way of obtaining any concept except from experience. Thus, custom should underlie both ethics and metaphysics. As Hume holds that moral judgment should be made from the general point of view, it is necessary to consider the relation between the general point of view and custom. If the general point of view serves as the principle of custom, it can be shown that the general point of view is the fundamental concept throughout the *Treatise*.

Custom is an elusive concept. There is no object that signifies custom. In order for custom to obtain, there needs to be similar events and a subject on whom those events have influences. No single event makes custom, nor does custom directly indicate plural events. Custom is a tendency of the mind which recognises a new event in connection to similar events. My proposal is that, in the first instance, the general point of view represents custom in this sense. Taking the general point of

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[9] Nicholas Capaldi names the turn from an "I think" perspective to a "we do" perspective the Humean Copernican turn. I disagree with him. My characterisation of Hume's constructivism as

view means to see an event in connection to similar events. If custom can be considered a specific function of association, there must be some principle by which it exists. It is the general point of view that is the basis of the principle of custom. Hume's fundamental empiricist position does not allow one to think that the general point of view exists somewhere independently of experiences (cf. Sayre-McCord, 1994: 202-228).[10]

This has to do with the concept of the universal. No experience remains in the mind except as its influence. There are two types of influences: one is "the memory (T 1.1.3.1; SBN 8)" that signifies the particular experience, and the other is the "the imagination (*ibid.*; SBN 9)" of the mind created as a result of the experiences. The contents of memory are all particular, and memory cannot identify one experience with other experiences. Therefore, only through imagination can the numerous particular experiences of the mind be integrated. Hume tacitly suggests that what are alleged to be universals can only be understood as this type of imagination. Hume argues this in his criticism of Locke's "abstract ideas". Hume denies any particular existence of the universal and explains the function of the universal that which is represented by the general point of view. Thus, the general point of view substitutes for the concept of universals. The general point of view, by virtue of being a particular view assuming generality signifies the experiential synthesis of the particular and the universal. This understanding confers a broad perspective to Hume's theory; the general point of view *functions* as a concept equivalent to, e.g., the Aristotelian "form" or the Kantian "categories". As I will argue in next chapter, Hume's moral sentiment is derived from the form or manner of perception, rather than its content.

Once the concept of the general point of view is established as the principle of custom, it is a fairly easy task to show the development of morality. Custom produces general ideas out of many particular ideas. And the generality of many particular interactions of numerous objects or the successions of events produce causation. Finally, imagination produces the fiction of external object as the sole

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his true Copernican turn will be clarified throughout this dissertation (cf. Capaldi, 1989: *passim*).

[10] I will discuss Sayre-McCord's interpretation Chapter 1.

source of many perceptions to complete the picture of the world. All of these developments of perceptions are guided by the working of custom, and thus by the general point of view which is also the principle of stability.

The perception of causation implies a particular manner of human behaviour which is to be named normativity. As causation consists in the psychological sense of necessity, human beings find it impossible to ignore it. Thus people behave in accordance with the perception of causal law before being forced to. This is what it means to have normativity. In this way, the relationship with natural objects provides human beings with the example of moral behaviour. This is the Humean program for the naturalistic foundation of morality. By connecting the theory of causation to moral theory, it is possible to have a full understanding of why the theory of causation occupies the central significance in Hume's philosophy.

The general point of view is not an Archimedean point, but is itself in the process of creation and development. The most significant implication of this is that the general point of view is primarily a concept of moral judgment. Morality is understood as the principle which sustains the progress of human nature. The general point of view is the moral point of view because it serves to promote such development. Here is the justification of morality and the justification of moral judgment; thus the general point of view is the moral standard that produces moral judgment. Human beings acquire the principle to create a stable relationship with their surroundings first through their interaction with their natural surroundings. As extension of this natural interaction, morality is the inclination people acquire to obtain a stable relationship with their human surroundings. Thus, human beings can only apply to moral judgements the same principle of the general point of view that they acquired in their interaction with their natural surroundings. In this sense, interaction with the natural surroundings provides the example of moral behaviour.

Humean constructivism illustrates how the system of morality has emerged from human nature. Hume's method is characteristically historical. It illustrates that human reality is a construct created by the association of perceptions. History, for Hume is a process of creating a new stability out of the interaction of perceptions. It is a dialectical process which is propelled by causation. The general point of view,

being involved in the development of a new stage of stability culminating in a civil society, is the principle by which history is constructed.

Chapter One:

Moral Sentiments and the General Point of View

Introduction

Ever since Adam Smith took note of the concept and developed it into his distinctive moral concept of the "impartial spectator", the general point of view has been conspicuous by its absence in the Hume literature.[11] Recently, however, discussion regarding the concept has become quite active within Hume scholarship. There is no doubt that Hume confers a significant role on the concept of the general point of view. In accordance with the order of arguments in the *Treatise*, discussion of morality comes at the end. However, as the fundamental purpose of this dissertation is to read the whole *Treatise* as a moral philosophy, it is convenient to discuss Hume's theory of morality narrowly so defined in this early part, so as to understand the moral implication of earlier discussions.

In this chapter, I take up recent arguments regarding the general point of view in Hume scholarship, and consider the general characteristic of Hume's concept of morals. Usually, the general point of view is understood as a moral device for making objective moral judgements. I argue that in order to understand the concept, it is not enough just to consider Hume's argument of moral sentiments. The central purpose of this chapter is to argue that the concept of the general point of view is concerned with all the relevant concepts of human nature.

Hume himself does not systematically explain the concept of general point of view. Moreover, the concept appears only in Book 3 of the *Treatise*. This is a

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[11] Scarcely any references of the general point of view are found in such famous commentators as Norman Kemp Smith, John Laird, or Charles Hendel (Kemp Smith, 1941; Laird, 1932; Hendel, 1925).

reason why the general point of view has received a biased treatment. I attempt to show that Hume's general point of view cannot be properly understood until the fundamental principle of the *Treatise* is clarified. In section 1, I outline Hume's argument in Book 3 of the *Treatise*. I argue the particularity of the moral sentiments. Then in section 2, I identify the context in which the concept of the general point of view appears in the *Treatise*. In section 3, I survey other commentators' interpretation of the general point of view. In section 4, I critically examine the interpretations of other commentators, and maintain that the general point of view is a predominantly epistemological concept. In section 5, I survey the concept of "general rules'. And in section 6, I discuss the difference between general rules and the general point of view.

1. Outline of Book 3

(a) Morality as Causation

In order to explore Hume's theory of morality, it is necessary to create a basic understanding of Hume's moral theory. As a first step, let me outline Book 3 of the *Treatise*, titled, "Of Morals" with references to the *Enquiry into the Principle of Morals*, as appropriate. Hume does not spare the trouble of explaining the definition of "impressions" and "ideas" at the beginning of each Book of the *Treatise*.[12] Hume classifies moral sentiments as impressions of reflection. In the theory of morals in Book 3, the moral sentiments are dealt with as impressions. He says,

> It has been observ'd, that nothing is ever present to the mind but its perceptions; and that all the actions of seeing, hearing, judging, loving, hating, and thinking, fall under this denomination. ... perceptions resolve themselves into two kinds, viz. *impressions* and *ideas*. (T 3.1.1.2-3; SBN 456)

[12] This suggests that each Book of Hume's treatise can be read independently of each other, which relates to the important problem concerning the relationship between the three Books, and the problem of the chronological order Hume conceived and wrote them (cf. Price, 1995, 3-11).

It is noteworthy that Hume classifies judging, thinking, loving and hearing as perceptions.[13] In this way, Hume deprives "thinking" of its privileged status. According to Hume's terminology, the distinction between impressions and ideas does not correspond to the distinction between emotion and intellect, and his discussion indicates that he sees emotion as having the same cognitive status as other activities. In this framework of perceptions, Hume sets up the central problem of his enquiry as follows.

> *Whether 'tis by means of our* ideas *or* impressions *we distinguish betwixt vice and virtue, and pronounce an action blameable or praise-worthy?* This will immediately cut off all loose discourses and declamations, and reduce us to something precise and exact on the present subject. (T 3.1.1.3; SBN 456)

This problem is one of the common concerns among philosophers of Hume's time (Norton, 1993: Ch. 6). It is a problem about the foundation of morality, or about how human beings are related to morality. Among many theories, two trends are especially important; one is theological thinkers who are influenced by Platonic philosophy (Stewart, 2003) and the other is egoist theories of morality that reduce morality to self-interest.[14] To this problem, Hume unequivocally answers that moral distinction is made by sentiments. Hume mentions the important reason for it:

> Since morals, therefore, have an influence on the actions and affections, it follows that they cannot be deriv'd from reason; and that because reason alone, as we have already prov'd, can never have any such influence. Morals excite passions, and produce or prevent actions. Reason of itself is utterly impotent in this particular. The rules of morality, therefore, are not conclusions of our reason. (T 3.1.1.6; SBN 457)

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[13] The corresponding explanations can also be found in T 1.1.1.1; SBN 1, and in T 2.1.1.1; SBN 276. Thomas Reid notes that "Mr. Hume gives the name of passion to every principle of action in the human mind" (Reid, 1819, vol. 3: 221). Hume's usage of sentiments are much wider than contemporary usages allow.

[14] This is a group that is influenced by Epicureanism. Bernard De Mandeville and Thomas Hobbes are the most important.

Hume understands morality as what causes orderly behaviour. There is an interesting parallelism between moral sentiment and causation in that both are concerned with human behaviour. Based on his theory of causation, Hume first tries to establish that morality is not a matter of reason. This is because reason is inactive and cannot motivate human action. Both causation and moral sentiments represent the qualities of objects, and influence the behaviour of perceivers. Therefore, it is possible to consider that Hume bases the argument of moral recognition on the same theoretical structure as that of causation. In his theory of causation, Hume argues that the "objectivity" of causation is a product of the custom of our mind. In a similar way, Hume concludes that the morality is not derived from reason but from sentiments.

By the positive assertion that morality motivates, he criticises his rationalist rivals who argue that morality consists in a relation detectable by reason. John Locke, for example, advocates a theory that morality consists in a relation that is demonstrative by reason (Essay 2.28.4f.). Hume maintains that the factual relationship that reason recognises in morality can be common both in humans and non-humans. His famous examples are "parricide" among trees, and "incest" among animals (Cf. T 466-468); while these would be regarded as hideous immorality in humans, they are innocent in non-humans. As morality matters in human behaviour alone, it means that no relation of fact is involved in moral judgement.

Hume's criticism of rationalism is based on the criticism of causality. Hume demands that if someone tries to establish that morality consists in reason, they must show the moral relation that obtains between inner activities and outside things (Cf. T 464-465). Moreover, Hume demands that they must show that the relation has a "necessary connection".

> 'Tis one thing to know virtue, and another to confirm the will to it. In order, therefore, to prove, that the measures of right and wrong are eternal laws, *obligatory* on every rational mind, 'tis not sufficient to shew the relations upon which they are founded: we must also point out the connexion betwixt the relation and the will; and must prove that this connexion is so necessary, that in every well-disposed mind, it

> must take place and have its influence; tho' the difference betwixt these minds be in other respects immense and infinite. (T 3.1.1.22; SBN 465)

To indicate the answer to this problem, Hume refers to the conclusion he has shown in this theory of causation, that:

> in treating of the understanding, that there is no connexion of cause and effect, such as this is suppos'd to be, which is discoverable otherwise than by experience, and of which we can pretend to have any security by the simple consideration of the objects. (T 3.1.1.22; SBN 466)

In Hume's discussion of causation, his intention is not to deny causation, but to establish causation as a human matter. The same is true in his discussion of morality; he denies the foundation of morality as an eternal truth detectable by reason, but does not deny morality as human causation. He intends to establish morality as a different type of causation in this Newtonian universe (cf. Schneewind, 1998, 361). As Hume describes morality as human causation, he will argue how it creates a moral world that enables people to live morally.

(b) Moral Sentiments

After establishing the basic claim that moral distinction is made by sentiments, Hume then proceeds to clarify which sentiment it is that makes a moral judgement:

> Now since the distinguishing impressions, by which moral good or evil is known, are nothing but *particular* pains or pleasures. ... To have the sense of virtue, is nothing but to *feel* a satisfaction of a particular kind from the contemplation of a character. The very *feeling* constitutes our praise or admiration. ... We do not infer a character to be virtuous, because it pleases: But **in feeling that it pleases after such a particular manner**, we in effect feel that it is virtuous. The case is the same as in our judgements concerning all kinds of beauty, and tastes, and sensations. (T 3.1.2.3; SBN 417, italics Hume, bold letters mine)

This is the most significant place where Hume explains moral sentiments. On the surface, Hume does not seem to give concrete definition to the moral sentiments. He only describes that as "*particular*" pains or pleasures. But it is necessary to understand wherein the particularity of moral sentiments consists. In fact, Hume is straight forward: what is important in moral judgement is not so much the content or rationality, it is the "manner" in which the observer perceives. We might call it "the Humean manner-formalism" to contrast it to the more famous Kantian formalism of universality.[15] It is significant that Hume characterizes morality by a particular manner of perception. The Humean general point of view is a perception of order, which lies not in the content of what is perceived, but in the way things are perceived. We should understand the manner literally as leading to the notion of refinement and politeness, which is a key term for developing man's moral capacity and society. For Hume politeness is the counter concept to enthusiasm.[16] To repeat the point, the general point of view consists in the manner of our perception which accompanies the manner of our behaviour that best accords with it.

Hume asserts that the object of our moral judgement is the motive of an action. We can only observe external physical movements as a sign of someone's character. Human character is treated in parallel with qualities of objects. Objects are known only through their quality.[17] The same can be applicable in the recognition of human character. Character is understood as a quality of a person that tends to cause a certain type of actions. Hume's theory treats moral sentiments from the perspective of an observer, rather than the cause of one's behaviour. In his criticism of Francis Hutcheson's moral sense theory, Hume denies that the moral sentiments are produced from any original quality of mind. Hume says:

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[15] It is possible to recognise that Kant's concept of "reflective judgement" in his third critique approaches the Humean position.
[16] This is the point Hume emphasizes in his "The rise of arts and sciences" (*Essays*). For convincing arguments, see Phillipson, 1987: 226-46; Klein, 1984-5: 186-214.
[17] Regarding Hume's usage of the concept of "object", see Green, 1994.

> 'tis absurd to imagine, that in every particular instance, these sentiments are produc'd by an *original* quality and *primary* constitution. For as the number of our duties is, in a manner, infinite, 'tis impossible that our original instincts should extend to each of them, and from our very first infancy impress on the human mind all that multitude of precepts, which are contain'd in the compleatest system of ethics. (T 3.1.2.6; SBN 473)

Hume's denial of the moral sense theory implies that moral sentiments are independent of the direct governance of natural constitution; moral sentiments are not the direct product of human constitution, but emerge through experiences. This should be understood as part of Hume's strategic shift of moral theory from a substance-centred to a relation-centred approach. There is no inborn moral norm. Morality is exempted from the direct rule of innate nature, because morality is concerned with how to react to the causal effects of an action. Past experiences are the key for orienting ourselves to the present immediacy. This is the fundamental sense in which I argue that Hume sees normativity as empirically produced. Because of this essentially emergent character of moral sentiments, they can control natural sentiments (cf. Baier, 1995). And because of this empirical nature, morality can become a causal force for the formation of society as a system of morality.

In accordance with the tendency of an object to produce pleasure or pain, one comes to have a feeling of either approval which is a pleasant sentiment, or disapproval which is a painful sentiment. "The good" means something to be chosen, and "the bad" something to be avoided. The distinction between the good and bad is thus concerned with the real effects of things or situations, and not just with the behaviour of people. Even if people's actual behaviour does not exactly correspond to their perception of moral sentiments, they are not invalid as the principle of morality. As Hume writes,

> Let these generous sentiments be supposed ever so weak; let them be insufficient to move even a hand or finger of our body, they must still direct the determinations of our mind, and where everything else is equal, produce a cool preference of what is useful and serviceable to mankind, above what is pernicious and dangerous. A moral distinction, therefore, immediately arises; a general sentiment of blame and

> approbation; a tendency, however faint, to the objects of the one, and a proportinable aversion to those of the other. (EPM 9.4; SBN 271)

Hume reduces morality to the principle guiding human behaviour; morality literally means that something is chosen or avoided, other conditions being equal. This is a causal perspective of the good and the bad. Things are naturally chosen when they are pleasant, and naturally avoided when they are painful. In this way, Hume rewrites the Thomistic tradition of the natural law that reads, "good is to be done and pursued, and evil is to be avoided" (Aquinas, 1988: *Summa Theologiae*, 1-2, q. 94, a. 2). Hume considers that this is a perverse way of speaking, because if things have their natural way, they need not be ordered to go that way, and it is in vain to try to prescribe what is contrary to the course of nature.

Now it is clear that the Humean moral sentiments are concerned with human behaviour. Therefore, the particularity of moral sentiments lies in its causal power to make people generally choose or avoid an object. On the other hand, moral sentiments have a function of making moral distinctions that apply commonly among people. Hume says in the *Enquiries*,

> The notion of morals implies some sentiment common to all mankind, which recommends the same object to general approbation, and makes every man, or most men, agree in the same opinion or decision concerning it. (EPM 9.5; SBN 272)

He also says that moral sentiments are "so universal and comprehensive as to extend to all mankind" (ibid.). Hume's universality is different from the Kantian universality, not a universality with no exception, but rather a generality. Everyone has a personal relation to an object. Therefore, the personal sentiment toward the object is different from person to person. If one object commands a general approbation among human beings, it is because of the *particularity* that causes similar sentiments in observers. Moral sentiments have the particularity of commending the same object as equally pleasant for people in general. This is particular because objects have a different effect on people in accordance with their

particular situation. For example, someone's ambition, say his high social status, does not cause everyone the same pleasure as the person himself. Hume's fundamental innovation is to seek for the locus of generality not in the original constitution of human beings, but in the perception of moral objects. This is why moral sentiments can produce an agreement among people.[18] Agreement regarding the perception of moral situations is crucial for moral behaviour. It is the basis for meaningful discussion; by sharing the same recognition as to a moral situation, human beings can have similar responses, which make human cooperation possible.

On the other hand, in the moral sense theories that have individual human beings as independent moral agents, common sentiments can only be those that originate from individuals. Most typically the egoistic sentiments are such: selfish sentiments to pursue pleasure and to avoid pain are common.[19] However, the selfish sentiments cannot serve as moral sentiments, even if found commonly among human beings, because they cannot commend the same things as good to be pursued to everyone. For example, precious metal, apart from its aesthetic pleasure, can cause a particular pleasure only to its possessor; to the selfish sentiment, precious metal is good only to the possessor, but worthless for others. This is why Hume thinks selfish sentiment cannot become a moral sentiment.[20] By the same token, altruistic sentiments, were they to be found universally among human beings, could not be moral sentiments as they are, because an altruistic act for one person does not mean the same thing for another. Among perfectly altruistic persons, there will be a conflict as to how to make the desire for altruism compatible among them. In terms of moral perception, altruistic sentiments alone cannot produce a general agreement as to the moral value of an object. Another method of agreeing what good and bad objects are will be necessary. That method is what the Humean moral sentiments

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[18] Social contract theories based on the agreement of people are a reverse way of discovering morality; moral perception brings agreement, therefore, what people agreement represent morality. But as morality lies in perceptions, agreement as a mere result does not guarantee morality (see Chapter 7).

[19] Contrary to its appearance, to make an egoistic sentiment eligible as a moral sentiment is by no means a bizarre idea. In fact, Hobbes, for example, tries to set it as the basis of his moral theory, which is one of Hume's main targets of criticism.

[20] It is obvious that Hume has Hobbes and Mandeville as targets of criticism. Hobbes develops a different story taking egoistic sentiment as a common standard (see Chapter 6).

purport to present, which can be applicable regardless of the moral quality of the human constitution itself.[21]

(c) Justice as an Artificial Virtue

Immediately after having established the theory of moral distinction, Hume proceeds to discuss justice. There is no doubt that Hume has a clear intention of revising the natural law theories of justice by transferring them onto the foundation of human nature. He introduces the discussion by asking whether justice is a natural or an artificial virtue. In asking this, he again points to the causal aspect of the morality of justice. He argues that justice cannot be a natural virtue because there is no cause in nature that produces justice. Hume then explains the process by which justice comes to be established as virtue from the natural and psychological condition of human beings. Justice is reduced to the manner in which human beings cope with each other with limited but sufficient resources to sustain themselves: here is the reason why Humean justice signifies an unintended explanation of distributive justice. Though justice is artificial, Hume claims that it is by no means arbitrary. He derives the rules of justice from the psychological tendency of human beings to feel attachment to their possessions. Thus, Hume proposes that the convention of adhering to one's own possessions and not violating others' possessions is the basis of the first law of justice of ordering the stability of possessions. In this way, he depicts justice as a feasible rule not inherent in a natural principle.

Hume then provides the rules of deciding property. He declines both the Hobbesian theory of the order by the sovereign and the Lockean labour theory. He indicates as the first rule "present occupation". This shows that he recognises property fundamentally as a matter of custom. As the second law of justice, Hume maintains the law of transference of properties by consent. Hume conceives the concept of consent as the derivative means for adjusting the property relationship, preparing his criticism of social contract theories. In this way, he explains the system that derives from the development of human interaction centring on property.

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[21] Later chapters will show that this signifies a criticism of the image of human beings as the

Based on the first two laws, he proposes the last law of justice, the implementation of promise. Hume explains the third law of justice with similarly detailed argument as he employs in arguing the law of property. He argues that there is no natural motive in implementing promise. Hume considers that promise becomes necessary when the transference of properties is conducted on a larger scale. Because of physical limitations, there are cases where people cannot physically observe the changes of property ownership. Then, promise serves as a convenient vehicle for conducting such commerce. More generally, promise enables the non-simultaneous exchange of labour which is the basic form of mutual cooperation. Thus promise is established from convention. It turns out that promise is the most comprehensive of all moral systems that enables all kinds of social arrangements. With the system of promise, the potential social system expands drastically. It is no wonder that social contract theories regard promise as the most fundamental basis of morality.

After establishing the three laws of justice, Hume discusses the origin of government. Hume finds the origin of government in the weakness of human mind; though people acknowledge the observance of the rules of justice, when their self-interest is at stake, they tend to become blind to them, and are quite easily induced to break them. Therefore, they agree to establish a political authority whose task is to force people to observe justice. Government, once established, can command cooperative tasks that are beyond the personal capacity of any individual. In this way large scale projects of public enterprises are carried out through government initiative. Hume shares the idea of basic functions of government with Locke. However, unlike Locke, Hume clearly states that the foundation of government is not promise. For one thing, there is no factual credibility that government is established by promise, and for the other, Hume understands that the most fundamental condition for the functioning of government is the allegiance of the people, rather than their consent.

Hume calls government "composition" or even "the finest and most subtle invention" (T 3.2.7.8; SBN 539). He discusses government in a like manner as he discusses property. In both cases, the principle that supports the system is custom

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creature of God, whether sinful or moral.

whose essence is the sense of attachment. Just as he discussed the rules of deciding property, Hume discusses the rules that confer authority on government. He maintains as the first principle---long occupation. This is clear evidence that he conceives the theory of government in the same line of argument as the system of property. However, he is no advocate of passive obedience. Hume supports the Glorious Revolution, and asserts the right to resist to protect the liberty of the public for public interest, even though he deems it absurd to establish exact rules that stipulate when revolutions are desirable.

(d) Natural Virtue

After establishing artificial virtue, Hume discusses natural virtues, with which he intends to complete the moral system of the *Treatise*. Hume explains the natural virtues in terms of their tendency that makes us approve individually. They have the direct tendency to increase the good of society. The difference between artificial and natural virtues consists in the fact that natural virtue produces the good on the basis of individual action, and artificial virtue produces good only when mankind concurs in a general scheme. After the scheme of law and justice is established, it is accompanied by "a strong sentiment of morals" which proceed from "our sympathy with the interests of society" (T 3.3.1.12; SBN 580).

Hume considers a possible objection to his theory that if sympathy is the origin of approval, it would be hard to explain the variableness of sympathy in a manner compatible with the requirement of morality as the stability of moral approval. In order to answer this challenge, he claims that we place our selves in "some steady and general points of view" (T 3.3.1.15; SBN 581-582) to prevent contradiction and to reach the stable judgment of things. It is noteworthy that Hume uses the concept of the general point of view for the first time at this late stage. He compares this process to a correction that we make in terms of sensory judgements. At the same time, Hume suggests that sympathy with someone who has commerce with the people we judge is the most convenient means to set the stable standard. Hume indicates four sources of character traits that produce moral pleasure or pain: qualities that are useful or pleasant either to others or to the person that possesses

them. He excludes from the sources of moral approval the interest of the observers, apparently reflecting his criticism of the egoistic moral theory. He asserts that unless people choose a general point of view from which to view things, people's feeling and judgement cannot agree with each other. According to Hume, moral interest and pleasure are constant and universal, and only produce particular feelings or pleasures.

Hume discusses the application of the four general principles to concrete cases of virtues and vices. He first explains the mechanism by which pride is regarded as vice, and humility is regarded as virtue through the principles of sympathy and comparison. Then he discusses goodness and benevolence, and asserts that a general and stable standard leads all people to the same moral evaluation of the good quality. He says that when a person has no undesirable relations with people around him, and with himself, then his character can be considered perfect.

As the final main point of natural virtues, Hume discusses "natural abilities". He remarkably claims that there is no real distinction between the natural ability and the moral virtues, because both are equally mental qualities, and are no different in producing pleasures. In other words, both are in the same standing in terms of causes and effects, thus it is not even possible to distinguish them strictly. Hume explicitly criticises moral theories that ascribe moral value to those people who have the best intentions without accompanying good effects. This can be understood as evidence of Hume's consistent project in the *Treatise* of liberating morality from a narrow confinement to cover the whole range of human activities. Though he makes a famous remark that virtue in rug is still a virtue, this makes sense only as derivative; if the virtue in good cloth has no good effects, then it would not be a virtue. He also asserts that the distinction between "voluntary" and "involuntary" does not make a difference to moral evaluation. By this assertion, Hume criticises the view that ascribes responsibility to free will. The implication of Hume's thesis that moral distinction derives from the pleasant or painful sentiment we perceive from the general contemplation of the quality or character. It is not essential whether the quality is produced voluntarily or not. This is also a result of Hume's position regarding the problem of liberty and necessity. Even if there is no room for free will in human behaviour, its does not mean moral responsibility is impossible. In this way, Hume excludes a theological or non-natural origin of morality, and elucidates

morality as a thoroughly human matter that covers the entire range of human activities, including especially the economic. At the same time, Hume's moral theory implicitly and explicitly criticises many rival theories such as egoist theory, rationalist theory, and theological theory.

2. The "General Point of View" in the *Treatise*

In order to discuss the significance of the general point of view, it is first necessary, to identify the idea of the general point of view, as well as its equivalent phrases, by showing the exact context in which Hume expresses it.

After clarifying that moral sentiments are a particular pleasure, Hume qualifies the sentiments as follows.

> Nor is every sentiment of pleasure or pain, which arises from characters and actions, of that *peculiar* kind, which makes us praise or condemn. The good qualities of an enemy are hurtful to us; but may still command our esteem and respect. **'Tis only when a character is considered in general, without reference to our particular interest, that it causes such a feeling or sentiment, as denominates it morally good or evil.** 'Tis true, those sentiments, from interest and morals, are apt to be confounded, and naturally run into one another. It seldom happens, that we do not think an enemy vicious, and can distinguish betwixt his opposition to our interest and real villainy or baseness. But this hinders not, but that the sentiments are, in themselves, distinct; and a man of temper and judgment may preserve himself from these illusions. (T 3.1.2.4; SBN 472, italics Hume, bold letters mine)

Hume emphasises that moral sentiments must be given from the general view that is of an empirical nature.

> Thus we are still brought back to our first position, that virtue is distinguish'd by the pleasure, and vice by the pain, that any action, sentiment or character gives us by the mere view and contemplation. This decision is very commodious; because it reduces us to this simple question, *Why any action or sentiment upon the general view or survey, gives a certain satisfaction or uneasiness?,* in order to show the origin of its moral rectitude or depravity, without looking for any

> incomprehensible relations and qualities, which never did exist in nature, nor even in our imagination, by any clear and distinct conception. I flatter myself I have executed a great part of my present design by a state of the question, which appears to me so free from ambiguity and obscurity (T 3.1.2.11; SBN 475-476, italics Hume).

Evidence that Hume is conscious of the general point of view is that he recognises the opposite concept as the source of immorality as seen below.

> 'Twas, therefore, with a view to this inconvenience, that men have establish'd those principles, and have agreed to restrain themselves by general rules, which are unchangeable by spite and favour, and **by particular views of private or public interest.** These rules, then, are artificially invented for a certain purpose, and are contrary to the common principles of human nature, which accommodate themselves to circumstances, and have no stated invariable method of operation. (T 3.2.6.9; SBN 532-533, bold letters mine)

Hume very commonly describes sentiments as resulting from "view", and moral sentiments as "general". Then, Hume considers a doubt to his theory that moral esteem does not proceed from sympathy, because sympathy varies without a variation in our esteem. In his answer to this question, he relies heavily on the concept of the general point of view.

> To this I answer: The approbation of moral qualities most certainly is not deriv'd from reason, or any comparison of ideas; but proceeds entirely from a moral taste, and from certain sentiments of pleasure or disgust, **which arise upon the contemplation and view of particular qualities or characters**. Now 'tis evident, that those sentiments, whence-ever they are deriv'd, must vary according to the distance or contiguity of the objects; nor can I feel the same lively pleasure from the virtues of a person, who liv'd in *Greece* two thousand years ago, that I feel from the virtues of a familiar friend and acquaintance. Yet I do not say, that I esteem the one more than the other: And therefore, if the variation of the sentiment, without a variation of the esteem, be an objection, it must have equal force against every other system, as against that of sympathy. But to consider the matter a-right, it has no force at all; and 'tis the easiest matter in the world to account for it. Our situation, with regard both to persons and things, is in continual

> fluctuation; and a man, that lies at a distance from us, may, in a little time, become a familiar acquaintance. **Besides, every particular man has a peculiar position with regard to others; and 'tis impossible we cou'd ever converse together on any reasonable terms, were each of us to consider characters and persons, only as they appear from his peculiar point of view. In order, therefore, to prevent those continual *contradictions*, and arrive at a more *stable* judgment of things, we fix on some *steady* and *general* points of view; and always, in our thoughts, place ourselves in them, whatever may be our present situation.** In like manner, external beauty is determin'd merely by pleasure; and 'tis evident, a beautiful countenance cannot give so much pleasure, when seen at the distance of twenty paces, as when it is brought nearer us. We say not, however, that it appears to us less beautiful: Because we know what effect it will have in such a position, and by that reflection we correct its momentary appearance.
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> In general, all sentiments of blame or praise are variable, according to our situation of nearness or remoteness, with regard to the person blam'd or prais'd, and according to the present disposition of our mind. **But these variations we regard not in our general decisions, but still apply the terms expressive of our liking or dislike, in the same manner, as if we remain'd in one point of view.** Experience soon teaches us this method of correcting our sentiments, or at least, of correcting our language, where the sentiments are more stubborn and inalterable.... Such corrections are common with regard to all the senses; and indeed 'twere impossible we cou'd ever make use of language, or communicate our sentiments to one another, did we not correct the momentary appearances of things, and overlook our present situation. (T 3.3.1.15, SBN 581-582, italics Hume, bold letters mine)

Hume emphasises that the general point of view is the standard of moral judgment for correcting our particular and momentary sentiment.

> The *seeming tendencies* of objects affect the mind: And the emotions they excite are of a like species with those, which proceed from the *real consequences* of objects, but their feeling is different. Nay, these emotions are so different in their feeling, that they may often be contrary, without destroying each other; as when the fortifications of a city belonging to an enemy are esteem'd beautiful upon account of their strength, tho' we cou'd wish that they were entirely destroy'd. **The imagination adheres to the *general* views of things, and distinguishes betwixt the feelings they produce, and those which arise from our particular and momentary situation.** (T 3.3.1.23, SBN 586-587, italics Hume, bold letters mine)

In a review of the section "Of the origin of the natural virtues and vices", he reiterates that a common point of view enables people with different interests to agree in the evaluation of characters.

> **But we shall easily satisfy ourselves on this head, when we consider, that every particular person's pleasure and interest being different, 'tis impossible men cou'd ever agree in their sentiments and judgments, unless they chose some common point of view, from which they might survey their object, and which might cause it to appear the same to all of them.** Now in judging of characters, the only interest or pleasure, which appears the same to every spectator, is that of the person himself, whose character is examin'd; or that of persons, who have a connexion with him. And tho' such interests and pleasures touch us more faintly than our own, yet being more constant and universal, they counter-balance the latter even in practice, and are alone admitted in speculation as the standard of virtue and morality. They alone produce that particular feeling or sentiment, on which moral distinctions depend. (T 3.3.1.30; SBN 591, bold letters mine)

In the section "Of goodness and benevolence", Hume explains more concretely what the general point of view is: a point of view of the close circle of the person under evaluation.

> We are quickly oblig'd to forget our own interest in our judgments of this kind [a judgment of moral character], by reason of the perpetual contradictions, we meet with in society and conversation, from persons that are not plac'd in the same situation, and have not the same interest with ourselves. **The only point of view, in which our sentiments concur with those of others, is, when we consider the tendency of any passion to the advantage or harm of those, who have any immediate connexion or intercourse with the person possess'd of it.** And tho' this advantage or harm be often very remote from ourselves, yet sometimes 'tis very near us, and interests us strongly by sympathy. This concern we readily extend to other cases, that are resembling; and when these are very remote, our sympathy is proportionably weaker, and our praise or blame fainter and more doubtful. The case is here the same as in our judgments concerning external bodies. All objects seem to diminish by their distance: But tho' the appearance of objects to our senses be the original standard, by

> which we judge of them, yet we do not say, that they actually diminish by the distance; but correcting the appearance by reflection, arrive at a more constant and established judgment concerning them. In like manner, tho' sympathy be much fainter than our concern for ourselves, and a sympathy with persons remote from us much fainter than that with persons near and contiguous; yet we neglect all these differences in our calm judgments concerning the characters of men. **Besides, that we ourselves often change our situation in this particular, we every day meet with persons, who are in a different situation from ourselves, and who cou'd never converse with us on any reasonable terms, were we to remain constantly in that situation and point of view, which is peculiar to us. The intercourse of sentiments, therefore, in society and conversation, makes us form some general inalterable standard, by which we may approve or disapprove of characters and manners.** And tho' the *heart* does not always take part with those general notions, or regulate its love and hatred by them, yet are they sufficient for discourse, and serve all our purposes in company, in the pulpit, on the theatre, and in the schools. (T 3.3.3.2; SBN 602-603, bold letters mine)

In the section "Some farther reflexions concerning the natural virtues", he once again clarifies that moral sentiments originate from the general view.

> It has been observ'd, in treating of the passions, that pride and humility, love and hatred, are excited by any advantages or disadvantages of the *mind*, *body*, or *fortune*; and that these advantages or disadvantages have that effect by producing a separate impression of pain or pleasure. **The pain or pleasure, which arises from the general survey or view of any action or quality of the *mind*, constitutes its vice or virtue, and gives rise to our approbation or blame, which is nothing but a fainter and more imperceptible love or hatred.** We have assign'd four different sources of this pain and pleasure; and in order to justify more fully that hypothesis, it may here be proper to observe, that the advantages or disadvantages of the *body* and of *fortune*, produce a pain or pleasure from the very same principles. The tendency of any object to be *useful* to the person possess'd of it, or to others; to convey pleasure to him or to others; all these circumstances convey an immediate *pleasure* to the person, who considers the object, and command his love and approbation. (T 3.3.5.1; SBN 614, bold letters mine)

As these quotations show, Hume apparently refers to the concept of "the general point of view" with a substantially consistent meaning, even if he was not strict about the exact phrasing of the idea. It is possible to consider that Hume has a concrete idea of the concept. Therefore, it is important to consider the relation between the concept and his theory of perception that is systematically developed in Book 1. Put the other way around, unless the solid epistemological ground is confirmed, Hume's theory of moral perception comes down to a very banal admonition that says, "Think generally!"

3. Interpretations of the General Point of View

Let us survey the interpretations of the general point of view by Hume commentators. I take up four representative interpretations which narrowly focus on the elucidation of the concept of general point of view.[22] Before making my comments on them, I try to convey the outline of their interpretation.

(a) Geoffrey Sayre-McCord

Sayre-McCord's paper "On Why Hume's "General Point of View" Isn't Ideal-and Shouldn't Be" is a groundbreaking work on Hume's concept of the general point of view (Sayre-McCord, 1994). For the first time in the major stage of Hume literature, he brought the problem of the concept to light, and thematically considered Hume's general point of view, especially clarifying the difference between Hume's general point of view and Smith's ideal spectator, which was generally regarded as a development of the general point of view and treated as a nearly equivalent concept.[23] He clarifies that an important focus of the problem is whether the general point of view is real or ideal/hypothetical.

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[22] There are more important articles thematically arguing the general point of view. I restrict myself to dealing with only four because of space. However, I will refer to other essays as necessary.

[23] For example, John Rawls says, "a society is right when an ideal spectator endorses it" (Rawls, 1999a: 161). In my Master's Thesis, I argued that Hume's general point of view should not be identified with the Smithean ideal spectator (see Yajima, 1991).

Sayre-McCord presents a clear interpretation of the general point of view that it is not an ideal spectator's point of view. Admittedly, there seem to be clear advantages of taking the general point of view as ideal observer theory; the general point of view can clearly indicate a normative standard for moral judgement. But Sayre-McCord objects to the understanding on the ground that "Hume's standard is a both more human in scope and more accessible in practice that any set by an Ideal Observer" (Sayre-McCord, 1994: 203). Though accessibility is important in Hume, and there are apparently no means for ordinary human beings to become omniscient or angelic sympathies. Hume's task is to explain our moral practice and justify it. Thus, Sayre-McCord proposes that the general point of view accomplishes this without resorting to the advantages of the Ideal Observer.

Our sympathetic responses vary in ways that are not reflected in our moral judgement. Sympathy remains parochial and variable in ways moral judgements are not, and is sensitive to actual effects. This is the weakness of the sentimentalist reading. Therefore, our moral judgement is not simply a reflection of sympathy. It is necessary to find ways of explaining how we can regulate sentiments' influence. According to Sayre-McCord, Hume holds that our moral judgements are appropriately guided not by how we individually feel at any given time, but instead by how we all would feel were we to take up a general point of view. He interprets the taking of the general point of view as what we would feel from a certain mutually accessible point of view, emphasising that the general point of view must be mutually accessible. Sayre-McCord points out that the situation is perfectly analogous to all the others where we judge of things discovered by sense. In those cases, our standard of correctness is found in how things would appear to a normal observer in normal conditions, which is represented by the general point of view.

As to the reason why we should adopt the general point of view, Sayre-McCord holds that it is to resolve conflict. Were we to remain in the situation peculiar to ourselves, we will never be able to communicate. But intelligibility is not the only reason for adopting the general point of view. Sayre-McCord understands that adopting the general point of view is the basis of moral thinking, which is absolutely crucial to a harmonious social life. Where our sentiments of approval and disapproval are stable, we can have stable plans and projects. In order to embrace a

standard that controls for sympathy's variation without losing sympathy's appeal, the only way is to introduce a mutually accessible and stable perspective from which we can all evaluate the world, which is the general point of view. According to Sayre-McCord, the Ideal Spectator's point of view cannot serve this purpose, because it is not sufficiently "accessible". He says,

> Our estimates of the Ideal Observer's view of the effects of someone's character will differ in exactly the way our judgements of the actual effects differ. As a result, an Ideal Observer sets an inappropriate standard, not simply because we cannot take up her position ourselves (though we cannot), but because we cannot begin to anticipate what her reactions might be. Ignorant as we all inevitably are of the actual, subtle, and long-term effects of each person's character on everyone who might be affected, even earnest attempts by all to determine how an Ideal Observer would respond would leave us without a common standard around which to coordinate our actions and evaluations. No longer each speaking from her own peculiar point of view, each could still be speaking from her own peculiar take on a point of view she would not possibly occupy. And this means an Ideal Observer cannot play the role that needs to be filled. (Sayre-McCord, 1994: 218)

In other words, the ideal observer's point of view would not resolve the conflict. On the other hand, the general point of view which represents the usual effects of a character is accessible, stable, and sufficiently univocal, thus serves as the standard to resolve conflicts. Thus, Sayre-McCord asserts that the advantage of the general point of view over other standards is that it is accessible to all of us. Because of the accessibility, he concludes, we can join "the *party* of human kind against vice or disorder, its common enemy" (EPM 9.9; SBN 275).

(b) Rachel Cohon

Rachel Cohon calls Hume's concept of the general point of view "the common point of view" (Cohon, 1997a). In her "The Common Point of View in Hume's Ethics", she first indicates that there are two problems regarding the interpretation of the common (general) point of view, which she summarises as follows.

> First, moral evaluations become inductive, empirical beliefs about what we would feel if we really occupied the imagined common point of view, and hence are the deliverances of causal reason; this contradicts Hume's claim that the making of a moral evaluation is not an activity of reason but of sentiment. Secondly, given Hume's thesis that the passions do not represent anything else, he cannot say that our moral evaluations will better represent the object being judged if they are made from the common point of view. This leaves no clear reason to adopt it, rather than making judgments from our real position. Hume says that left to our particular point of view, we will encounter contradictions and be unable to communicate, but it is hard to see why. (Cohon, 1997a: 827)

Cohon finds the reason Hume introduces the common point of view in his replies to two criticisms: one is that the sentiments of sympathy are variable in accordance with the distance from the object, though moral judgement should be stable; the other is that we do not disregard virtue even if the virtue is in rags, and does not have any real effect. According to Cohon, it is in order to reply to those two objections that Hume introduces the stipulation that we make moral evaluations from the common point of view. Taking the common point of view, as Cohon understands, is to treat moral judgements as cognitions, especially, beliefs (frequently counterfactual ones) about what someone or anyone would feel if she occupied a point of view close to the person being evaluated. This would make moral evaluations inductive, empirical beliefs, presumably based on past experience of the effects of people's character traits on themselves and their closest associates.

However, Cohon holds that the moral beliefs obtained from the general point of view can be taken as the deliverances of causal reason. Then, she claims that it contradicts Hume's explicit claims that to make a moral evaluation is not to infer or conclude but to feel in a certain way, and that making a moral evaluation is not an activity of causal reason but of sentiment. This is a problem because this can undermine Hume's antirationalism and his sentimentalist position. To this problem of the compatibility of taking the general point of view with his sentimentalism, Cohon answers that:

> we feel certain passions from our particular vantage point, and whenever we contemplate the same character from the common point of view we feel another, weaker sentiment. That is, we feel two sentiments toward that same character trait. (Cohon, 1997a: 836)

Therefore, the general point of view, which produces inferential sentiments, does not exclude the sentimentalist reading. Cohon maintains that the two sentiments correspond to calm and violent sentiments. Thus, the common point of view provides calm and steady sentiments. When the two sentiments differ, violent sentiment, with all its fluctuations, is corrected. But Cohon claims that

> The situated sentiment is the *general* principle of our praise or blame in the sense that it is the general origin or source of what later *becomes* our praise or blame.... So it [the situated sentiment] is the moral sentiment, properly so-called, although under the best conditions, in which the steady sentiment converts the situated one, there really is no issue of which is the moral sentiment properly so-called. (Cohon, 1997a: 839)

In this way, as Cohon argues the moral sentiments are not confined to the ones that is obtained from the general point of view, she faces the problem of why it is that we need to take the general point of view when situated sentiments are already moral sentiments. Therefore, her second question results from her answer to the first question. She says that since Hume asserts that passions do not represent anything, there is no guarantee that taking the common point of view produces a better moral evaluation than otherwise.

In order to answer this problem, Cohon points out that our moral judgments need to be uniform, mostly "because our moral evaluations always carry with them certain *other* judgments that *are* objective" (Cohon, 1997a: 840). Cohon holds that because of this extra-moral judgment, moral judgment should be uniform. She apparently agrees with Sayre-McCord that the general point of view gives us not a panorama, but an intimate glimpse. It is a viewpoint of those who have a connexion with the person considered. Cohon recognizes an important function of moral judgment to convey important information. Just as we need a stable point of view to

inform others about objects, we need the common point of view in moral information. This is why the ultimate test of moral quality is the information of those who are nearest to the person. Thus, she holds that the common point of view with those is "an intimate glimpse of the person herself and her nearest associate" (Cohon 1997a, p. 845). She says,

> The common point of view is a privileged position from which to make moral evaluations because it is a privileged position from which to make causal judgments about pride, humility, love and hatred, and moral evaluations are inseparable from these. (Cohon 1997a, p. 846)

In Cohon's understanding, "Hume is not giving an account of what it is for moral judgments to be warranted… he is only explaining the uniformity he observes in them" (ibid.). Thus, according to Cohon, taking the common point of view is not necessary for making moral judgment. She says,

> On my interpretation, then, Hume does not say that we should make moral evaluations from the common point of view because only such judgments are well-grounded. If someone makes her moral judgments not from the perspective of her own interest (this would be wrong kind of sentiment altogether), but from the situated sentiments she feels when she contemplates character traits in general from her peculiar point of view, rather than from common point of view, her resulting judgment is not false and not lacking needed support. (Cohon, 1997a: 847)

In short, Cohon understands the common point of view not as a specifically moral point of view nor as a point of view for justification; she takes "the common point of view as a mere fine-tuning of Hume's moral theory, not an overhaul" (*ibid.*).

(c) Christine Korsgaard

Korsgaard's paper, "The General Point of View: Love and Moral Approval in Hume's Ethics" is an interesting twist to interpretations of the general point of view

(Korsgaard, 1999). As she acknowledges, she does not attempt to be loyal to Hume, but to extend the possibility in Hume in a direction that might realise interesting theory, especially about the complex relation between loving someone and thinking him good or virtuous. Her leading questions in the argument are to explore "why we take up the general point of view", and "why we are inclined to think that the judgments we make from it are normative" (Korsgaard, 1999: 4).

First of all, we cannot appeal to moral ideas in order to explain why we take up the general point of view in the first place. Korsgaard understands that virtue and vice are intimately related to love and hatred in Hume. She modifies the problem into different terms of why there should be a normative standard for love. Then, Korsgaard indicates that the idea of a cause of love can be subject to a normative standard (Korsgaard, 1999: 9). She finds here the key to explaining why we take up the general point of view.

According to Hume, love can be caused by many things, such as nonmoral psychological attributes, physical attributes, external goods and virtue (Korsgaard, 1999:10). However, virtue is not just one of the many causes of love, but --- at least "with regard to our mental qualities", the cause of love. Hume seems to maintain that moral approval is a calm species of love, because it is founded on a distant view or reflection. Korsgaard explains the relation between love and moral approval as follows.

> When we view a person from the general point of view, we feel a particular calm species of love or hate, which is moral approval or disapproval. The qualities that arouse these calm passions are the ones we call "virtue" or "vices." But these are not merely particular forms of love and hate, on a footing with our more personal and unregulated passions. Moral approval and disapproval are corrective of, and normative for, our more violent personal loves and hates. (Korsgaard, 1999: 12)

In this way, Korsgaard translates the question why we take up the general point of view into why should there be a normative standard for love and why the

general point of view should provide the standard. Korsgaard summarises Hume's own answer to these questions as follows.

> So Hume cites, as the reason we need to take up the general point of view, the need to avoid the contradictory judgments of unregulated sympathy, the need to stabilize all sensory judgments, and the need to converse on some agreed terms. (Korsgaard, 1999: 14)

It is important and necessary, therefore, that there be some shared point of view other than that one we use. But Korsgaard still questions why a shared standard has to exist, if it is necessary for our conversation or for avoiding contradictions. She says, "the answer cannot be that our judgements about virtue are contradictory until we take up the general point of view, since we make no moral judgements at all until after we take up the general point of view" (Korsgaard, 1999: 16-7). We might be indifferent to whether or not we concur with others in our loves and hates.

Thus, Korsgaard asserts that there is no answer in Hume's text as to the question why we take up the general point of view, and why we take the judgements we make from the general point of view to be normative. She argues that the answer lies in the reason we need to come to some sort of agreement about what makes a character lovable. No one is recognised as lovable or responsible to some action unless she is not a cause of an action. Therefore, Korsgaard claims that "to think someone as a person, we must think of her as having a character" (Korsgaard, 1999: 29).

In order for people to be recognised as having a character, people must be placed among the members of their narrow circle. Their character exists only in the eyes of their narrow circle. Therefore, according to Korsgaard, "to see you as having a character is essentially to take up the point of view of your narrow circle towards you". She points out the factual link of treating people as a person and having the general point of view. She sums it up as follows.

> We can now see why the general point of view is essential. To view someone through the eyes of love or hate is to respond to him as a person. To respond to him as a person is to view him as having a character. To view him as having a character is to view him as a cause, that is, a regular source, of happiness and misery to himself and others. And to view him as such a cause is to view him through the eyes of his narrow circle, that is, from the general point of view. A person's character, his personhood, is constructed from the general point of view. Thus the pressure to take up the general point of view is built into the original connection between love and its object, a person. (Korsgaard, 1999: 32)

Korsgaard explains why moral approval is normative for love in general. As Hume separates cause and object in the case of love of people, it is impossible to love people for themselves. But if moral love is the love of character, and character is the person himself, then, Korsgaard insists, we can love the person for himself, by loving his character. Moral approval should be grounded in appreciation of character. She holds "external beauty, rank, or money" cannot rightly be regarded as the inherent standard for loving a person. Just as baking a cake implies making it taste good, or the notion of knife implies sharpness, "love by its very nature aspires to be the love of character, to find its ground in the person himself" (Korsgaard, 1999: 34). In this way, Korsgaard answers to the question why we take up the general point of view when we think about and respond to people. She sums up her answer as follows.

> We take up the general point of view because that is the point of view from which others appear to us as persons. If love and sympathy did not impel us to view the world from the general point of view, our fellow human beings would just be so many useful or dangerous objects to us. According to Hume, it is only when we view the world from the general point of view that the moral world ... the world composed of people who have characters and perform actions ... comes into focus. (Korsgaard, 1999: 35)

In this way, Korsgaard connects the general point of view with the respect of person. It is possible to see that, as a hard-line Kantian, she attempts to present a Kantian interpretation of Hume's theory.

(d) Kathleen Wallace

Kathleen Wallace in her "Hume on Regulation Belief and Moral Sentiment" interprets the general point of view as a focusing activity, employing a photographic analogy (Wallace, 2002: 83-111). According to her interpretation, the general point of view is a device for "strengthening of sentiments for those remote and weakening of sentiments for those near" (Wallace, 2002: 83). Wallace claims that her interpretation does not undermine Hume's sentimentalist thesis, but explains how sentiments are properly aroused and directed. She thinks that proper moral sentiments can be understood in a similar manner as the regulation of belief. Proper moral sentiments are like regulated beliefs. Wallace says, "regulating consists in the mitigation, not the wholesale elimination, of the influence of uncorrected beliefs and passions. (Wallace, 2002: 89)" She allies with Sayre-McCord and Elizabeth Radcliffe in thinking there are incorrect moral sentiments prior to the general point of view to be corrected by the general point of view.[24] Wallace says,

> A general point of view eases inter or intra-individual conflict (inconstancy and variation) as well as the tendency toward partiality in one's sympathy by focusing attention on relevant character traits and their typical effects so that the appropriate moral sentiments can be aroused via the mechanism of sympathy. (Wallace, 2002: 93)

Therefore, the general point of view can attain "steady and impartial evaluation". Wallace claims that the broader one's intercourse with others, the more one comes to realise the need for a common point of view (Wallace, 2002: 94). She thinks that the mind creates the general point of view by the "imaginative act of focusing" (*ibid.*), which she explains by using the analogy of a photographer selecting and focusing and in so doing creating a subject matter. In this way, she claims, the natural sympathetic responses of human beings become "impartial". Wallace takes the

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[24] Elizabeth Radcliffe questions whether, for Hume, moral judgments are based on actual human feeling, or on the hypothetical feelings of an ideal spectator. She argues that it is based on the actual human sentiments (Radcliff, 1994: 37-58).

general point of view as "something invented" by imagination. In her analogy, she alleges three characteristics in the general point of view, a) a general point of view can make sympathy more extensive, b) a general point of view allows one to produce the appropriate vividness in the idea of the effects of a person's character traits, c) a general point of view facilitates the process of causal reasoning about the matters of fact in question (Wallace, 2002: 95). She notices that Hume tends to emphasize more the defects in our judgement on those distant from us due to the weakness of their impact on us, rather than the vivacity of self-interest and partiality in assessing those who are close to us. But she understands that we correct defective judgements of overestimation by taking the general point of view.

Another important point in Wallace's interpretation is that she tries to understand taking the general point of view as an analogous process to that of correcting beliefs. She understands that the regulation of moral sentiments involves a contrariety just as the regulation of belief involves a mitigating or weakening of an incorrect belief through contrariety. She summarises the process of the spectator making moral evaluation in the following ways.

1. to attend to those to whom s/he might otherwise be indifferent (and thus underestimate their character),
2. to be more judicious in assessing those to whom s/he might be partial (and thus overestimate their character),
3. to make more accurate discernment of the causal relations involved as attention settles on the character traits or qualities and their tendencies rather than the particular persons,
4. to have the moral sentiments of praise and blame aroused by the steady contemplation of the character traits and their usual tendencies,
5. (with reasonable discourse) to generate more general principles by which to assess character traits, that is, by which to apportion praise and blame. (Wallace, 2002: 96-97)

Wallace thinks that moral judgment is a result of these processes. It does not matter for her whether these are done through conscious efforts or through unconscious habit. As to the problem between the "conscious efforts" interpretation and the "unconscious habit" interpretation that William Davie formulated, Wallace thinks

that it can be both.[25] She applies the analogy of Hume's "wise men" (T 1.3.13.12; SBN 150) who apportion to evidence as a matter of habit. On the other hand, "the vulgar" habitually make unsound inferences; for them adoption of the general point of view comes from conscious effort. Wallace holds that regulation is the crucial factor to have moral belief, and that there would be no common morals at all, without the general point of view (Wallace, 2002: 100). She holds that the difference between the regulation with regard to belief and with regard to morals is that in the case of belief, the conflict is just within one's own mental activity, but in the case of morals, it is social. She formulates the differences as follows.

> In Hume's characterization regulation in morals requires in some respects an opposite move from that required in causal reasoning. In the latter, the tendency of the mind is to overextend itself by not distinguishing carefully between accidental and essential connections. ... In morals, the case is more complicated in that one has to both employ the regulative rules of causal reasoning that involves narrowing, and from a general point of view that requires a broadening of one's point of view, and intensifying of focus so that the relevant object(s), that is, persons, can appropriately affects one's sympathy. (Wallace, 2002: 100)

Wallace thinks that to have impartial moral beliefs it is necessary to broaden one's view and have broad sympathy. She emphasises that the regulation of morals consists not in the wholesale replacement of incorrect belief, but in the production of impartial judgement (Wallace, 2002: 102). Hume's reasonable person, or the "judicious spectator", would focus on the relevant facts and put oneself in the point of view that would allow moral sentiments of appropriation and disapprobation to be appropriately aroused and enlivened.

4. Meaning and Significance of "The General Point of View"

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[25] William Davie, "Hume's General Point of View", Davie compares two interpretations of the general point of view, whether it requires conscious efforts or it is an unconscious habit. He concludes in favour of the unconscious habit interpretation (Davie, 1998: 275-94).

Now let me clarify the understanding of the concept of the general point of view through examining the interpretations of above commentators. These four commentators and their diverse interpretations indicate a fairly accurate picture of the present interpretative situation of the general point of view.

First, Sayre-McCord's contribution is to have clarified that the general point of view is not a moral ideal. He successfully clarifies that to take the general point of view as an ideal spectator's point of view is to confuse Hume's theory with the idealist theory. He considers inaccessibility to be the reason why the ideal spectator's point of view cannot be a moral point of view. If the ideal spectator's point of view should be the moral point of view, every person must decide individually which is the ideal spectator's point of view. Thus there will be no concurrence in moral communication. However, it does not seem that Sayre-McCord solved all the problems regarding the general point of view.

First of all, he does not clarify the exact definition of the concept. Though Sayre-McCord seems to take the point of view of one's close circle as the general point of view, mere accessibility is a weak condition for deciding the general point of view. For example, his understanding does not exclude the delight of the closed circle of a successful thief from moral approval. He holds that the general point of view tells us how things would appear to a normal observer in normal conditions. But, who this normal observer is, and what normal conditions are, cannot be determined without problems. The general point of view is what shows this normality. Sayre-McCord's understanding of the point of view of one's close circle as the general point of view does not explain how the general point of view becomes normative. In the discussion of justice, Hume clearly rejects the point of view of one's close circle as the cause of injustice. If, as Sayre-McCord and others maintain, the point of view of one's close circle is the general point of view, then the general point of view does not apply to Hume's theory of justice. Also, though Sayre-McCord claims that the reason we take the general point of view is to avoid conflict, he does not show how this is possible: it is far from obvious why we can avoid conflict by taking the general point of view. Unless he shows the grounds, it would mean that Hume arbitrarily demands that we agree with the opinion of the close

circle of the person we consider for avoiding conflicts. Though Sayre-McCord argues that the general point of view is not an ideal point of view, he does not show how it still is a moral point of view. As he denies the ideal spectator's point of view on the grounds that it does not have a prospect of realizing morality, he is obliged to show how the general point of view realizes morality.

If Sayre-McCord's initial point can be understood to mean that morality emerges from experience, then, my claim that custom provides the general point of view seems to fit nicely with Sayre-McCord's view. On the other hand, if he asserts that the condition for morality is empirical validity, he needs to show that the general point of view functions as a principle also in promoting morality on a social scale. He does not indicate any connection of the concept with Hume's theory of justice. But as I will discuss in later chapters, the general point of view can be shown to be the principle of justice. Unless Hume's epistemology and the theory of justice can be explicated consistently by the same concept, it cannot be said that Hume's moral theory is empirical. The general point of view should be such a principle, if it is the moral point of view. It is regrettable that Sayre-McCord's argument falls short of making this point explicit.

Cohon's central claim is that the general point of view is not the moral point of view, but is helpful to tune the moral sentiments. Though she does not deepen our understanding of the concept of the general point of view, she may represent a common view among many Hume readers. First of all, she chooses to use the term "the common point of view" to refer to the general point of view, though she does not show at all why she prefers this term. Hume clearly implies a particular significance in that concept of generality. Hume deploys the concept of custom in the explanation of general ideas. Because the general point of view is imbedded in the concept of custom, it has to do with generality. To say the least, it needs to be made clear that Hume's moral perception signifies the generality of a particular view in the sense he discusses in his criticism of Lockean abstract ideas. "Point of view" is related to Hume's moral standard because Hume's theory in the *Treatise* is a theory of perceptions which emerge from a point of view. A point of view presents a

particular view, and the general point of view does not mean any substantive position in itself, but rather a manner of perception that connects the particular to a generality.

Despite Cohon's concern about taking "the common point of view" as an inferential process, Hume never argues that taking the general point of view is inferential, or the working of reason. If this is clear, Cohon's challenge undermines itself. She challenges the view of assuming the essential role of the general point of view in making moral judgments. However, she does not show a strong ground for this. Her grounds are simply negative; because passion is an original quality, there is no guarantee that the general point of view represents morality. It should be clear that Hume does not say moral sentiments are arbitrary by the claim that passions are an original quality. Cohon mistakenly understands that the general point of view signifies an inferential process, because she does not see any connection between the general point of view and Hume's epistemology. Cohon claims that the reason we take the general point of view is because moral judgments are accompanied by non-moral objective facts. But this is not Hume's view. Hume's general point of view explains morality, and not, as Cohon interprets, accompanying features of morality. Cohon's interpretation, which might be common, reveals the importance of understanding Hume's moral theory in connection to his epistemology. Besides, Hume's concept of objectivity should not simply be presupposed without close examination.

Unlike Cohon, Hume defines the general point of view as the moral point of view. If moral sentiments carry no feature of normativity in their creation, Hume's moral theory is no more than a psychological or sociological description of something unknown, but vaguely understood "morality". In fact, Hume's fundamental intention is to show how it is that morality, without relying on the rational faculty of reason, can still be non-arbitrary and cause order and stability among people. Hume's general point of view will not properly be understood unless its origin is elucidated. By failing to notice the peculiar moral significance of the general point of view, Cohon loses sight of the connection between Hume's theory of morality and objective fact, and closes the possibility of understanding the role and

significance of the general point of view in the formation of social stability and political order.

Korsgaard's Kantian interpretation inadvertently reveals some characteristics of the general point of view. First of all, her first assumption of identifying moral sentiments with love and hatred, on which her entire thesis depends, is already questionable. As Don Garrett indicates, it is wrong to reduce Hume's moral sentiments to love and hatred, even though moral sentiments can produce love and hatred as the case may be (Garrett, 2001: 214). They are "particular" sentiments. Hume's moral sentiments are not love and hatred because the moral sentiments are more widely concerned with all kinds of mental activities beyond passions. Korsgaard is mistaken to think that one should not morally evaluate others for "external beauty, rank, or money". This is a typically Kantian prejudice. Hume positively includes those as causes of moral approbation.

However, her major claim lies in her exposition of why we take the general point of view in making moral judgment. Simply put, she asserts that it is in order to recognize others as a person. Again, as Korsgaard herself says, this is not Hume's view. Hume does not consider respecting a person as the final objective in the claim of morality, neither does he think that unless we recognize other peoples' characters, we in fact treat others merely as so many useful or dangerous objects to us. Even if we do not know other peoples' characters, we will avoid injuring them on the working of sympathy. The person is not a central concept in Hume's ethics, because Hume is more focused on moral situations, and on the creation of moral institutions, which are not composed of persons, but produce the recognition of them. In this respect, Hume's moral theory is oriented toward the system of morality rather than individuals.

Moreover, Korsgaard wrongly identifies the general point of view with the point of view of a close circle. As mere physical closeness does not guarantee the moral point of view, it is necessary for her to clarify why Hume claims that a close circle tends to present the moral standard. The general point of view has its ground in Hume's epistemology. There is no concept of the general point of view in Kant's

system. And the Humean person does not mean the end of morality in Hume's system. Korsgaard has no means to connect the two. She thus fails to recognize the comprehensive significance that bridges Hume's epistemology and his moral theory. The concept of the general point of view makes no sense when taken out of the context of Hume's whole theory.

Korsgaard asserts that there is "no answer" in Hume's text as to why we take up the general point of view. But it is too early to agree with her. This is a very unsympathetic way of reading philosophical theory. What is the evidence for her to assert that there is no answer in Hume's text? Is it because Hume does not say, "Look! Here is my answer why we should take up the general point of view"? There is something fundamentally wrong about how she is looking for of the understanding of morality in Hume. Even though Korsgaard is not totally unconscious of it, her paper shows the danger of forcefully reading another philosophy into Hume.

Wallace has made a unique point by maintaining the analogy between taking the general point of view and making corrections to beliefs. Though her argument still remains in a rudimentary stage, it is an assertion of showing the connection between Hume's epistemology and moral theory. Basically, she understands the general point of view as a device for correcting moral sentiments. She also interprets Hume's moral sentiments as love and hatred.[26] She seems to agree with Korsgaard and some other commentators in recognizing the existence of moral sentiments before taking the general point of view.[27] But why it is possible to name sentiments moral prior to taking the general point of view is not explained. She applies the analogy of focusing from photography to the general point of view. While Wallace claims that taking the general point of view is like narrowing or widening the focus of the object of sympathy, it is hard to see more significance in her explanation than mere metaphor. In her analogy, deciding the appropriate range of the focus is what it means to take the general point of view. In that she does not explain how it is

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[26] This preconception is widespread because of the influence of Pall Ardal's *Passion and Value in Hume's Treatise* (Ardal, 1966: *passim*). For my criticism of Ardal, see concluding chapter.
[27] Charlotte Brown discusses this problem (Brown, 2001: 197-203).

possible to decide the appropriate focus, her explanation is a tautology. Wallace assumes that the focus is changed by widening the sympathy to the people concerned. But Hume reveals his central point, that we cannot freely extend the objects of sympathy, when he insists that there is no such a thing as the love of mankind. In fact, we do not know what to do to have sympathy with more people. My understanding of the general point of view as the principle of custom seems to be able to overcome Wallace's failure. Unlike Wallace's interpretation, the general point of view is not concerned with a spatial analogy, but indicates an experiential connection with past events.

Wallace explains what happens when a spectator makes a moral evaluation, taking the general point of view as a five step process. She understands Hume's theory of moral evaluation as a description of the process of moral judgment. Obviously, she takes the general point of view as a technical device for adjusting moral judgment, though for Hume it defines morality itself. Regarding the opposition between the "unconscious habit" and "conscious efforts" interpretations, she claims that the "wise man" takes the general point out of view unconscious habit, and the "vulgar" needs conscious efforts. This is plainly wrong, as she does not show how to distinguish the wise man from the vulgar. It needs to be stressed that Hume does not offer a procedure for making a moral judgment. Rather, he explicates the correct moral perception as consisting in the general point of view.

There is other evidence that Wallace misunderstands Hume's morality: she treats beliefs and morality differently while insisting that the manner of corrections are analogous. But this is wrong because morality in Hume is presented through the theory of belief. To have wrong belief does not mean that the conflict is just within my own mental activity. Hume's original claim is that there is no clear boundary between my belief and public opinion; if someone has a wrong belief, it causes confusion in society. Therefore, to have an appropriate belief is morally important. Hume's general point of view is a standard for true moral belief. If morality is conceived as a special kind of causation, it cannot be fully elucidated without exploring the argument of causation in Book 1. And if the general point of view

represents the essence of morality, it should also be an underlying concept in causation.

Common among the four commentators, and as far as I know all other commentators who argue thematically about the concept of the general point of view, is a neglect to consider the general point of view much beyond the narrow discussion of Hume's theory of moral judgment. Also, they do not show the further connection of the concept with the establishment of social institution such as justice or allegiance to government. They do not define the general point of view exactly in relation to the theory Hume develops in his epistemology. The general point of view must be understood in reference to his epistemology, especially as composing the core structure of custom. The general point of view, along with custom and convention, is the central concept that penetrates and fundamentally characterizes the whole *Treatise*. This dissertation attempts to show the whole significance of the concept of the general point of view. And this new reading will decisively present the whole *Treatise* fundamentally as a consistent moral theory.

5. Hume's Concept of "General Rules"

Beside "the general point of view", Hume's *Treatise* features another important concept involved with generality, which is the concept of "general rules".[28] It is useful to explore the concept of general rules to clarify the particular significance of the general point of view. Thomas Hearn's "General Rules in Hume's Treatise" (Hearn, 1970: 405-22) is regarded as a classic argument of this concept (cf. Martin, 1993: 245), by which Hearn attempts to explore Hume's constructive, nonsceptical point of view. He first classifies two types of general rules:[29] one type of general rule is "a propensity of the imagination to extend the scope of judgements formed in one

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[28] The concept of "general rule(s)" appears 22 times in Book 1, 12 time's in Book 2, and 21 times in Book 3 and the Appendix.

[29] Jack C. Lyons denies the distinction Hearn proposes (Lyons, 2001: 274-5, endnote 20). He claims that there are only good and bad general rules. He indicates that there is no clear definition of the general rules in Hume (Lyons, 2001: 253).

set of circumstances to other resembling but non-identical circumstances", while the other type "functions to correct certain natural propensities which result in erroneous belief or action if permitted to operate unchecked" (Hearn, 1970: 405-6). Hearn understands that adhering to these reflective rules renders an appropriate verdict. Hume's general rules appear in the place where he deals with the subject of unphilosophical probability. Hume's famous example of general rules is the prejudice that "An *Irishman* cannot have wit, and a *Frenchman* cannot have solidity" (T 1.3.13.7; SBN 146). Hume explains the general rules as follows,

> Shou'd it be demanded why men form general rules, and allow them to influence their judgement, even contrary to present observation and experience, I shou'd reply, that in my opinion it proceeds from those very principles, on which all judgements concerning causes and effects depends. Our judgements concerning cause and effect are deriv'd from habit and experience; and when we have been accustom'd to see one object united to another, our imagination passes from the first to the second by a natural transition, which precedes reflection, and which cannot be prevented by it. Now 'tis the nature of custom not only to operate with its full force, when objects are presented, that are exactly the same with those to which we have been accustom'd; but also to operate in an inferior degree, when we discover such as are similar; and tho' the habit loses somewhat of its force by every difference, yet 'tis seldom entirely destroy'd, where any considerable circumstances remain the same. (T 1.3.13.8; SBN 147)

Therefore, Hearn understands that the general rules share the same origin as habit or custom. Influence of general rules explains the conflict of judgement and imagination; because imagination has a generalising propensity, it tends to oppose the unique judgement of reason. By making reference to the rules formed on understanding, "we learn to distinguish the accidental circumstances from the efficacious causes" (T 1.3.13.11; SBN 149). The conflict of imagination and judgement can be seen as a conflict of the two types of general rules; between the one that works on the imagination and the one that is formed on our understanding. The first tends to lead to error and the other serves as a good guide of our judgement. Hume notes that "[t]he vulgar are commonly guided by the first, and wise man by the second" (T 1.3.13.12; SBN 150).

Hearn shows that general rules are applicable not only in belief and passions, but also in the area of human actions. Of the two kinds of virtues Hume discusses in Book 3,[30] Hearn insists that artificial virtues, more concretely the three rules of justice, constitute another instance of reflective general rules (Hearn, 1970: 416). Above all, Hearn asserts that "the rule concerning the stability of possessions is a reflective general rule" (Hearn, 1970: 417). He holds that the rules of justice are reflective on the human situation, and corrective to redirect acquisitive impulse, and directive to enable man to enjoy the benefits of society. Thus, Hearn maintains that "Hume intends us to understand this discussion from the perspective of his treatment of general rules in Books 1 and 2", and that "artificial virtues are regarded by Hume as reflective general rules" (Hearn, 1970: 419). In this way, Hearn thinks that he shows the consistency between the 3 Books of the *Treatise* centring on the concept of general rules.

Hearn indicates that the correction of moral sentiments by reflective principle has to do with general rules. It is supposed to be the key for our having stable, common judgement despite the fact of our variation of intensity of sentiments through sympathy. Hearn understands that the correction of sentiments to meet the requirements of morals take place by the use of general rules. The use of moral terms is made possible by "the propensity of the imagination to generalise from one set of circumstances in which certain qualities have produced good consequences to resembling ones in which the qualities are seemingly present but the consequences presented" (Hearn, 1970: 422). Hearn takes general rules as representing this propensity. In this way, Hearn concludes that "a genuine moral judgment for Hume is the outcome of certain moral feelings corrected or evaluated by general rules" (*ibid.*).

Hearn is not the only commentator who ascribes normative standards of rational judgement to general rules (Martin, 1993: 245-57). Nicholas Capaldi claims that the capacity to be influenced by standard conditions or what Hume calls the general view is the result of the presence of general rules (Capaldi, 1989: 121). Also,

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[30] I shall discuss Hume's theory of justice in connection to the general point of view in Chapters 6 and 7.

David Norton regards Hume's appeal to general rules as evidence of his reliance on reason. Norton says, "Reason formulates general rules that serve not only to correct our sentiments, but also enable us to distinguish between sentiments which may seem alike," thereby saving us from "moral illusion" (Norton, 1982: 130). Marie Martin, in her "The General Warrant for Hume's General Rules", criticises those interpretations. Martin explains how general rules derive their normative authority, thus she seeks for the rational warrant for regulating judgments according to general rules. Her answer to the question of the normative authority of general rules is as follows.

> Continual adherence to general rules ensures the consistent application of the fundamental and unavoidable principles inherent in our reasoning. These principles are the foundation of our thoughts and actions and it is only by following these principles that we achieve a consistent system of orderly, coherent, and stable judgements. We cannot justify guiding our judgement by general rules in the traditional manner --- by showing that following them will result in true judgements. But, if the "love of order" is indeed inherent in human nature, then we must concede that employing a method of judgment formation that can provide a system of orderly and stable beliefs is rationally preferable to one that cannot. (Martin, 1993: 256)

Thus, Martin considers the constant adherence to general rules enhances the rationality of judgment. On the other hand, Jack Lyons maintains that "it is the influence of (the good) general rules, *and only* this, that allows us to correct our judgement." He proposes two standards by which to distinguish the good general rules from the bad, that ought to influence our belief. They are:

> (1) *The extensiveness Constraint*: The good general rules are only those that are held on the basis of a large number of experiences.
>
> (2) *The constancy Constraint*: The good general rules are only those for which experience has provided few or no apparent exceptions. (Lyons, 2001: 259)

Lyons further claims that:

> many of the general rules of which Hume disapproves can be interpreted as involving either the influence of general rules that fail to meet the Extensiveness and Constancy Constraints or the failure to take account of relevant extensive and constant general rules. (Lyons, 2001: 264-5)

Thus, Hume's example of Irish men being witless is mistaken because it is based on too narrow an example. In addition, Lyons asserts that reliance on extensive and constant general rules is what makes a belief justified; utility is what makes having justified beliefs desirable (Lyons, 2001: 268-9). More fundamentally, Lyons holds that the purpose of philosophy is to satisfy the curiosity regarding abstruse or philosophical questions, as well as to meet other, daily, pragmatic ends. According to him, this is the reason we should formulate beliefs in accordance with the philosophical method. Extensiveness and constancy provide the mark by which we can tell whether we are reasoning like the wise or like the vulgar. Lyons asserts that a source of normativity consists in these beliefs (Lyons, 2001: 271).

6. "General Rules" and the "General Point of View"

Now let us consider the relation between general rules and the general point of view. The most significant point of those interpretations is to see Hume's theory as non-sceptical argument. It is certainly an important propensity of human nature to generalise experiences that seem to form regularities. Most commentators on general rules assume them to be the standard of judgment and behaviour. However, there seem to be some problems about their interpretations. First of all, though Hearn and others imply that correct moral judgment is an application of general rules, Hume does not say so. Hume's theory of making moral judgment is to take the general point of view. Even if they are right, general rules do not unconditionally serve as a moral standard for two reasons. First, rules depend on their application. Rules are neither good nor bad in themselves: good general rules do not make sense when they are applied to wrong cases, and even bad rules such as "An Irishman cannot have wit" might do no harm when they are not applied at all. Second, the ground for deciding good or bad general rules does not lie in general rules themselves. Hume's

general point of view is conceived as a standard to distinguish the good moral judgment from the bad one. Therefore, general rules are not the last ground for making judgements. It is possible to think that good general rules are those that are in accordance with the general point of view and bad ones are those that are not.

Hearn indicates that artificial virtues of justice are general rules to demonstrate the consistency of 3 Books of the *Treatise*. However, Hume's artificial virtues of justice cannot adequately be characterised as reflective general rules. It is a mistake to think of artificial virtues of justice as general rules, because, though general rules represent probability, justice is a law that does not permit probability. What produces the three laws of justice is not inherently reflective principles; it has more to do with the natural and psychological circumstances of human beings. Humean theory is founded on a more fundamental principle than general rules. Therefore, the consistency of 3 Books of the *Treatise* should be demonstrated through more inherent principle than general rules.

Martin does not show convincing evidence in her assertion that by adhering to general rules, we can achieve a consistent system of orderly judgement. It is conceivable that blind adherence to general rules results in a disorderly judgement. Hume surely recognises the human necessity to stick to general rules in ordinary life, but his more fundamental objective is to show the true principle for distinguishing good from bad general rules. Lyons's argument can be understood to answer this problem. However, though he proposes the two constraints as the justification of general rules and assumes utility to be what makes general rules desirable, this is not Hume's view. Rules themselves do not produce utility. It sounds like a tautology to say that good general rules are good because they are successfully applicable extensively and constantly. This does not teach us a lot about the principle of general rules. It is necessary to clarify exactly what makes general rule extensive and constant.

Regrettably, this definition of general rules diverges from the original concept that Hume observes in human nature. General rules are only statements of the general propensities of accumulated experience, and do not serve as a criterion for justification of beliefs. Hume regards general rules as a human propensity of

relying on the influence of custom. Unlike the general point of view, there is no synthesis of the particular and the general in general rules. He does not use them for justifying human beliefs, either. On the contrary, his point in the argument is that however extensive or constant the past experiences have been, it does not justify the belief. On the other hand, the general point of view is a criterion for appropriate beliefs. In short, there is no creativity in general rules. Rather than general rules, the general point of view should be examined as the central concept of moral judgment and as the fundamental principle that provides justification to our beliefs.

7. Concluding Remarks

So far, we have discussed the arguments regarding the general point of view and general rules. If, as I have claimed, commentators' arguments are not adequate, it is because they consider the concept independently of Hume's more comprehensive arguments of epistemology. This is concerned with their understanding of morality. I have explained Hume's moral sentiment that is represented by the general point of view as a manner-formalism. As Hume attempts to elucidate morality as a human matter, it is necessary to consider morality as concerned with the whole range of human life from the most basic mechanism of perception to the formation of political authority.[31]

Whether we call it the common point of view or the general point of view, it is more important to understand the function and the significance of the concept. To say the least, the general point of view plays a central role in Hume's theory of moral judgment. If Hume's moral theory has to do with his epistemology, this means that the general point of view is involved in yielding the perceptions of general ideas, causation, and objects as the natural composition of the human world. Even if we do not use the concept of the general point of view, it is undeniable that we understand morality, and behave morally based on those perceptions. As far as we adhere to naturalistic and empiricist presuppositions, which Hume implies by the experimental method, we can only understand morality in connection to the provisions of the

human world. Put the other way round, unless morality is clarified by a persistent principle, from Hume's epistemology through to his concept of political society, Hume's theory of human nature cannot be considered as a comprehensive moral theory that covers all the activities of human beings. In the following chapters, we will develop the theory that the general point of view can serve as such principle.

[31] For evidence of the striking similarity between Hume's anatomist method and Spinoza's naturalism, see the "Dictum" on page iii.

Chapter Two:

Custom, Resemblance, and the General Point of View

Introduction

In the *Treatise* 1.1.7, "On Abstract Ideas", Hume develops a significant criticism of the Lockean concept of "abstract ideas". This chapter contains three central claims. The first claim is that the argument is to be read as providing a definition of the Hume's concept of "custom". The second claim is that "resemblances" among things are not detected on the basis of any particular feature that is found by reason. Resemblances tend to create associations of perceptions, and custom is based on these associations. And the third and the main claim is that the "general point of view" that Hume employs in discussion of moral assessments should be understood as the principle of custom. This chapter is an attempt to find in the concept of custom significant relationship between the Humean epistemology and his moral theory. In section 1, I examine Berkeley's attack on Locke's abstract ideas. In section 2, I explain that the Hume's concept of custom serves to classify particular impressions, thus it replaces Locke's concept of abstract ideas. In section 3, I criticise the standard interpretation that takes Hume's theory of "distinction of reason" as Hume's own theory for classification of ideas. In section 4, I argue that custom is a conceptual variant of the general point of view. This chapter will clarify that the concept of the general point of view occupies a central place in Hume's entire theory by being the principle that supports the concept of custom.

1. Locke and Berkeley on Abstract Ideas

Hume declares perceptions to be the only material of the human mind. Perception comprises impressions and ideas; impressions are all our sensations, passions and emotions as they first appear in the mind, and ideas are only their weaker form. This

already suggests the line of argument he is ready to develop. It is to show how our understanding of the world, both physical and moral, is constructed from those primitive materials. At the same time, Hume's discussion of perception is so composed that, being placed at the beginning of the Book, it sets the stage for the whole argument.

It is a matter of fact that we can experience the world as something harmonious, or, to say the least, as something more than just a chaotic gathering of perceptions. The world usually appears to us as a meaningful object rather than just a congregation of isolated and individual sets of impressions and ideas. This means that there is a gap between the perceptions that are given from initial experiences, and the belief of the world that is alleged to be composed from no other materials than these perceptions. Hume's task is to fill this gap. If successful, whatever he fills the gap with will provide the whole etiological explanation for the final construction.

As the empiricist usually denies the existence of anything above and beyond the particular experiences, empiricist philosophers have difficulty accounting for universal concepts.[32] As an English philosopher after Francis Bacon, Locke's conceptualism is an answer for overcoming the difficulty of nominalism (Woolhouse, 1971: Chs. 5, 6). Lockean abstract ideas, while rejecting "nativism", play much the same role of classifying knowledge. The problem is to meet two contradictory requirements. On the one hand, our ideas have to have an origin in either sense or reflective experiences, and on the other hand the particular has to be explained as an instance of the more general kind under which it is classified. In order to do this, there has to be an idea of the more general kind which is compatible with the fact that we perceive only particular ideas.

Locke assumed a special function of human understanding that produces abstract ideas. According to Locke, human beings have an ability to abstract from concrete ideas an attribution, to form an abstract idea that has a universal function. Commentators agree that Locke provides two different explanations for producing abstract ideas (cf. Bennett, 2001b: sec. 161). The first explanation in Book 2 of the *Essay* is usually referred to as a selective attention account (Mackie, 1976: 110; Jolly,

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[32] For a general explanation of the problems of universals, see e.g. Armstrong, 1989.

1999: 50), according to which abstract ideas are made by taking note of one component of complex ideas that is commonly seen among them.[33] He explains as follows:

> the Mind makes the particular *Ideas*, received from particular Objects, to become general; which is done by considering them as they are in the Mind such Appearances, separate from all other Existences, and the circumstances of real Existence, as Time, Place, or any other concomitant *Ideas*. This is called ABSTRACTION, whereby, *ideas* taken from particular Beings, become general Representatives of all of the same kind; and their Names general Names, applicable to whatever exists in the Mind, without considering, how, whence, or with what others they came there, the Understanding lays up (with names commonly annexed to them) as the Standards to rank real Existences into sorts, as they agree with these Patterns, and to *denominate* them accordingly. Thus the same Colour being observed to day in Chalk or Snow, which the Mind yesterday received from Milk, it considers that Appearance alone, makes it a representative of all of that kind; and having given it the name of *Whiteness*, it by that sound signifies the same quality wheresoever to be imagin'd or met with; and thus Universals, whether *Ideas* or Terms, are made. (*Essay* 2.11.9)[34]

The second interpretation is referred to as an "elimination account".[35] This reading seems to be closer to be the original meaning of *ab-stract* than the selective attention interpretation. Locke shows how the actual "way of abstraction" is conducted, as follows:

> the *Ideas* of the Persons Children converse with … are like the Persons themselves, only particular … Afterwards, when time and a larger Acquaintance has made them observe, that there are a great many other Things in the World, that in some common agreements of Shape, and several other Qualities, resemble their Father and Mother, and those

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[33] J. L. Mackie considers selective attention account as the only explanation Locke offers (Mackie, 1976: Ch. 4).

[34] In other place, Locke describes abstraction again as the act of separating ideas "from all other *Ideas* that accompany them in their real existence" (*Essay* 2.12.1).

[35] Jolley points that even a selective account will involve a kind of elimination; it will involve the rejection of certain features of the experience as objects of attention. But unlike the elimination account, there the alleged abstract ideas are not the product of human understanding (Jolley, 1999: 50).

> Persons they have been used to, they frame an *Idea*, which they find those many Particulars do partake in; and to find they give, with others, the name Man, for Example. And *thus they come to have a general Name*, and a general *Idea*. Wherein they make nothing new, but only leave out of the complex *Idea* they had of *Peter* and *James*, *Mary* and *Jane*, that which is peculiar to each, and retain only what is common to them all. (*Essay* 3.3.7)

Abstract ideas are supposed to be a simple idea of a sensible quality. An obvious difficulty with the selective attention interpretation is that in order to recognise the common component, one has to be able to identify in advance which component to select. For example, take snow, sugar, salt and white marble; one can classify these as things white only because one already possesses the abstract idea of whiteness. Without such an idea, it would be impossible to choose appropriate ideas to be classified as belonging to a same group. But this would then be circular: one classifies white things as white on account of their being white. This does not explain how one comes to possess abstract ideas in the first place. There is another difficulty in the selective attention reading; it is difficult to explain why abstract ideas can serve to represent complex ideas. For example, one cannot identify milk by referring to its colour only, nor by its being liquid, nor by its being nourishing. In fact, no complex ideas can be represented by any one particular component. More decisively, Locke says that abstract ideas are "Fictions and Contrivances of the Mind" (*Essay* 4.7.9). This is incompatible with the selective attention account.[36]

On the elimination account, Locke seems to think that what is left after subtracting all the particular attributions will be the abstract idea. However, Locke's assumption that something will remain after the procedure is not well-founded. Even if one could separate every accidental feature from the complex idea, there is no guarantee that what is left will be a property that can be shared by all particulars classified under a single general subclass. For example, there is no obvious reason why the particular idea of "Socrates" and the particular idea of "Plato" should be reduced to the same abstract idea. Why is it that after the elimination they should

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[36] The selective attention interpretation can be an afterthought that is influenced by Hume's theory of the distinction of reason, as we shall see below.

retain, for instance, the abstract idea "man" in common, rather than "skeleton", or perhaps "sin"? Thus, the elimination account has a similar circularity to the selective attention interpretation: one has to know in advance which component to eliminate and which to retain before obtaining the abstract idea that is general. From an empiricist point of view, Hume would say, one cannot obtain the idea of "man" only by observing Socrates, nor can one obtain it only by observing Plato. There is no impression exclusively corresponding to "man". In order to classify either Socrates or Plato as a "man", one has to possess the idea of "man". In other words, the abstract idea that is to be produced has to be clear beforehand. The most significant opponent of Locke's account of abstract ideas is George Berkeley. Berkeley notes the following passage of Locke's *Essay*.

> Does it not require some pains and skill to form the *general Idea* of a *Triangle*, (which is yet none of the most abstract, comprehensive, and difficult) for it must be neither Oblique, nor Rectangle, neither Equilateral, Equicrural, nor Scalenon; but all and none of these at once. In effect, it is something imperfect, that cannot exist; an *Idea* wherein some parts of several different and inconsistent *Ideas* are put together. (*Essay* 4.7.9)

What annoys Berkeley is the suggestion that the general idea of a triangle is "all and none of these at once". He complains that there can be no idea that is contradictory, and that what cannot be conceived cannot exist. The elimination account is inconsistent with a theory of ideas as images. The basic difficulty comes from the fact that Lockean abstract ideas are not compatible with the Berkeley's premise that ideas must be particular to be perceived. Berkeley criticises that it is impossible to perceive any idea that is at once concrete and not-particular, although Locke apparently implies both in his notion of abstract ideas;[37] Lockean abstract ideas are a mere creation of human mind and confined only to intellectual operations, and thus lose the connection with reality.[38]

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[37] Regarding Berkeley's possible misunderstanding of Locke, see e. g., Stewart, 1994: 123-147; Waxman, 1994: 88.

[38] This goes back to Cartesian position (cf. Stewart, 1994: 123-147).

However, Berkeley does not correctly understand Locke. Locke's central assertions are that "general and universal belong not to the real existence of things; but are the inventions and creatures of the understanding" and that "the *sorting* of them [Things] under Names, is the *Workmanship of the Understanding*"[39] (*Essay* 3.3.13). By regarding the abstract ideas as produced by understanding, Locke thinks that he makes it compatible with the empiricist position and can explain why we can have recognition beyond our experience.[40] As Locke tries to explain generality in terms of a universal feature among the recognitions of any object of a kind, he has to assume that human understanding has the ability to deal with abstract ideas. Difficulties lie in explaining how the new creation of the understanding correctly represents the empirical particulars. On the other hand, Locke's explanation of the function of abstract ideas is quite clear; abstract ideas serve as the basis of universal knowledge that enables people to classify particulars, and thus makes communication possible (cf. *Essay* 2.11.9,10). Abstract ideas are required to exist for the human mind to understand the world. Hence, if one can construct a theory that does not need abstract ideas to make communicative understanding possible, it would achieve Locke's objective without the ambiguities he poses for the abstract ideas.

Berkeley thinks that his theory of idealism hinges on the thorough denial of Lockean theory of abstract ideas (Pappas, 1995: 131-43). If there could be any abstract idea that is not directly founded on perception, the role of perceiver, and thus ultimately the role of an all-perceiving God becomes redundant: a conclusion that is wholly destructive to Berkeley's philosophy (cf. Bennett, 1989: 44). Hume agrees with Berkeley's criticism of Locke's theory of abstract ideas. Hume says,

> A very material question has been started concerning *abstract or general ideas, Whether they be general or particular in the mind's*

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[39] J. L. Mackie, in his defence of Locke's account of abstract ideas, encourages us to be "charitable", and proposes to construe it as something indeterminate, something that corresponds to 'kind' of the particulars. Mackie proposes that Lockean abstract ideas do not combine inconsistent ideas but it is indeterminate (Mackie, 1999: 123; cf. Jolley, 1999: 52).

[40] It does not matter for our purpose that Locke's explanation of the abstract idea seems 'less than clear'. The point is that he admits that we somehow possess the abstract idea that function as something universal (cf. Jolley, 1999: 50; Mackie, 1976: 110).

> *conception of them?* A great philosopher has disputed the receiv'd opinion in this particular, and has asserted, that all general ideas are nothing but particular ones, annexed to a certain term, which gives them a more extensive signification, and makes them recall upon occasion other individuals, which are similar to them. As I look upon this to be one of the greatest and most valuable discoveries that has been made of late years in the republic of letters, I shall here endeavour to confirm it by some arguments, which I hope will put it beyond all doubt and controversy. (T 1.1.7.1; SBN 17)

However, Hume does not share Berkeley's fundamental aim.[41] Hume shares only a negative view of Lockean abstract ideas with Berkeley. Berkeley does not deny the existence of all general ideas but only the existence of abstract general ideas. According to Berkeley, general ideas function as a sign that represents many other particular ideas (Berkeley, 1998: "Introduction", sect. 12).[42] Berkeley sticks to the basic framework of an epistemology that presupposes the independent existence of the perceiver. It was most important for him to deny the abstraction from perception, or the idea that ideas can exist without being perceived. If there is no universal feature on the side of objects, the function for universality is sought in the faculty of the perceiver who is capable of entertaining "indifferently a great number of particular ideas". This both requires and justifies God as the ultimate perceiver: a conclusion that is most incompatible with Hume.

2. Abstract Ideas and Custom

As Hume emphasises the importance of the denial of the Lockean theory of abstract ideas, there is good reason to assume that he lets this denial guide his entire argument throughout the *Treatise*. Hume argues that proponents of Locke must suppose that the abstract idea of "a man" represents either "all possible sizes and all possible qualities, or no particular one at all" (T 1.1.7.2; SBN 18). Hume gives two reasons for this. First, "that 'tis utterly impossible to conceive any quantity or quality,

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[41] M. A. Stewart argues that Hume misrecognises Berkley's and Locke's theories. See Stewart, 1994: 123-147, esp. 130; Bracken, 1984: 90-109.

[42] For general argument among commentators, see e.g., Beardsley, 1991: 123-33; Bennett, 1989: 37f.

without forming a precise notion of its degree (*ibid.*)." And second, "tho' the capacity of the mind be not infinite, yet we can at once form a notion of all possible degrees of quantity and quality in such a manner at least, as, however imperfect, may serve all the purposes of reflexion and conversation (*ibid.*)." Let us note that Hume maintains these claims by appealing to the common observation of ordinary life. As a fact of our ordinary life, the world is so made that we never encounter a perception that leaves no hint at all about its classification. This is not because we have an ability to perceive the essence of new perceptions, but because we have no other means but to connect them with the classes we are already acquainted with in some way. Nonetheless, this seems to be enough from a practical perspective because what matters for us is to be able to attain a common reaction to the object, rather than a correct understanding of the object.

In criticising Lockean abstract ideas, Hume holds that "'tis impossible to form an idea of an object, that is possest of quantity and quality, and yet is possest of no precise degree of either" (T 1.1.7.6; SBN 20); we should not assume abstract ideas as long as we retain the empiricist position. Hume does not accept the notion of abstract ideas because they contradict his definition of an idea as the copy of the impression.[43] Thus he denies once and for all the possibility of Lockean abstract ideas.[44] Hume's negative argument, however, is followed by a positive argument. Shortly after giving the above argument Hume begins to explain what abstract ideas really are.[45] He denies the function of reason that Locke assumes, and then fills the gap by referring to the fact of human nature. Hume takes the same pattern in his discussion of causation, and also in his discussion of moral distinction. Hume thinks that the impossibility of abstract ideas leaves possible only one explanation that "Abstract ideas are therefore in themselves individual, however they may become general in their representation" (T 1.1.7.6; SBN 20). Therefore, Hume, while denying

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[43] It is necessary to remember that Hume converts the concept of "idea" in Locke to "impression". For a thorough discussion on the copy principle, see Garrett, 1997, Ch. 2.

[44] Hume's reason for rejecting Lockean abstract ideas anticipates his rejection of Lockean natural law theory where reason finds moral law by abstraction. In both cases, Hume finds unacceptable he idea that human reason is capable of producing universal agreement.

the existence of specifically abstract ideas, tries to find their function in particular ideas as employed in reflection and conversation.[46] It is possible to assume that any particular idea can function generally, as we have no particular idea that is used completely independent of any association.[47] This is because generality is what makes ideas meaningful; association with other resembling particulars explains the meaning of particular perceptions. Unlike the Lockean explanation that admits the particular prior to abstract ideas, particularity comes only with generality in Hume.[48]

Understanding of an idea is first possible when it is associated with other resembling and familiar particulars; if there are only as many different meanings as our empirical perceptions, there is no explaining any particular perception, and there is no understanding of the perceptions of other people. Thus, the most important function of abstract ideas is not universal recognition, which is not necessary for communication, but only that it "may serve all purposes of our reflexion and conversation" (T 1.1.7.2; SBN 18). What we actually do in our consideration of new experiences is to regard them as another case of resembling experience that we already have, and to deal with them as such. It is possible that this does not work very well in some cases, which is typically represented in a failure of communication. But what is more important is that it is the only means for us to communicate particular perceptions.

Hume says that "[t]he image in the mind is only that of a particular object tho' the application of it in our reasoning be the same, as if it were universal" (T 1.1.7.6; SBN 20).[49] Here Hume clearly takes note of the function of the abstract idea;

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[45] Hume may be a little bit careless to continue to use the term "abstract idea" after he has denied it. It is apparent that Hume's explanation of the general idea is modelled on Spinoza's "knowledge of the first kind" (*Ethics*, 2nd part, props. 18 and 40).

[46] Hume is confident as to his reasoning because, as elsewhere, his argument obtains support from our natural custom (T 1.1.7.16; SBN 24).

[47] Thomas Hobbes distinguishes "Proper" and "Common" Names (*Leviathan* 26). Hume breaks the tradition of Hobbes and Locke who make a sharp distinction between the general and the particular (see Chapter 6).

[48] As we will see later, this is analogical to the relation between individual and society. In Locke, there are individuals before society, but Hume does not support this idea.

[49] Kemp Smith summarises that "there is no abstract ideas of any kind, but only this and that particular images, and that in addition to images there is nothing save the act of mind whereby through custom and custom these particular images suggest others no less determinate" (Kemp

it proves to be enough for his purpose if he can explain its function, if not its real essence. Hume says, "To explain the ultimate causes of our mental action is impossible. 'Tis sufficient, if we can give any satisfactory account of them from experience and analogy" (T 1.1.7.11; SBN 22). This is another instance where Hume replaces the truth-value of empirical facts with their functional validity. He explains the mechanism as follows.

> When we have found a resemblance among several objects, that often occur to us, we apply the same name to all of them, whatever differences we may observe in the degree of their quantity and quality, and whatever other differences may appear among them. After we have acquired a custom of this kind, the hearing of that name revives the idea of one of these objects, and makes the imagination conceive it with all its particular circumstances and proportions. (T 1.1.7.7; SBN 20)

It is in this crucial place that the concept of "custom" that Hume calls "a kind of magical faculty in the soul (T 1.1.7.15; SBN 24)" is significantly used for the first time in the *Treatise*. And the point is that what makes ideas general does not consist in any of their intrinsic features, but the *custom* with which they are linked via a general name. Some important characteristics of Humean custom are made clear here. First of all, custom does not make sense unless a certain number of perceptions have been accumulated through experiences. It does not mean of course that any group of particulars can crystallise itself into a custom. The key for producing custom out of numerous particulars is their "resemblance", especially with respect to their effects on the senses, owing to which newly obtained particular perceptions appear familiar.

Custom is produced as a result of the natural internalisation of particular patterns of impressions. This does not require any positive working of understanding. Therefore, it is natural. This naturalness lends itself to certainty with respect to the

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Smith, 1941: 262). This is followed by a harsh criticism. I shall discuss Kemp Smith's criticism later.

meaning of the particular idea.[50] As custom is a mechanism of referring a particular to its kind, custom in effect confers generality on the particular. Therefore, generality consists in the association of ideas through custom rather than in any content or type of ideas. In this way, the locus of the generality has shifted from ideas in the Berkeleyan theory, to the perceptive reactions of human beings. If, as in Berkeley, general ideas in themselves represent particular ideas, how each new particular idea is related to the general ideas has further to be questioned. By contrast, Humean general ideas do not represent other ideas, on the contrary, their significance is determined only by other associated particulars. Reason does not determine which series of impressions make which custom. The role of reason is to recognise the particular in their final classification, rather than to produce their classification. There is no universal feature in objects to be discovered by reason, not because our reason is too weak to discover one, but because it is none of the business of reason.

Unlike Locke or Berkeley, Hume's central concern is not to explain the acquisition of language.[51] To have a custom is a precondition for having a name for certain type of experiences. The mind's recognition of resemblance naturally leads to forming a certain custom of associating them.[52] Resemblance already means to place at least two or more objects in association. Therefore, resemblance as a natural and philosophical relation prepares the way for custom to obtain. Resemblance also represents the cognitive aspect of custom, and the custom in turn reinforces the association of resemblances to confer on them a natural and solid appearance. Generality of ideas means not that a particular idea changes into something that is no longer particular, but that a particular idea is associated with other particulars. In other words, to have a general idea means to place a particular idea in association with those similar to it so that it can be treated in the same manner. In the Humean theory of the natural mechanism of custom, we have an explanation why all of us can

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[50] This is parallel with the mechanism of causation where the psychological sense of necessity composes the causal necessity (see Chapter 3).

[51] Stewart characterises Berkeley's and Hume's theory as "association-as-signification" versus "signification-as-association" (Stewart, 1994: 130). I agree with Stewart that Hume's theory of custom is not predominantly semantic.

[52] R. I. Aaron seems to take this way at least in the dealing with the resemblance among the complex ideas (Aaron, 1942). My understanding is that Hume does not distinguish the essence of resemblance between the two cases.

have an understanding of ever new experiences.[53] There can of course be "mistakes" in classification, but it is the only way that we react to new situations by the perception of resemblance---correcting mistake simply means to connect it to other resembling perception. In the Lockean theory, we can make no sense of new situations without abstracting particular perceptions.

3. "Distinction of reason"

In the last two paragraphs of section seven, Hume develops in an inadvertent manner a theory called "the distinction of reason". The theory seems to trigger confusion for the whole argument of the section. Some commentaries take it as Hume's own theory, and criticise Hume for his sudden change of opinions.[54] Kemp Smith for instances claims regarding the "distinction of reason" that:

> The verbal inconsistency in his admission of distinctions other than those between simple ideas (i.e. of distinctions apprehended by 'reason'), is connected ... with his failure to discuss the nature of the abstract itself, i.e. of the *resemblance* that makes possible general terms and the custom that attaches to them; and it is because his terminology is devised to suit the problems to which he has alone given real attention, that it has betrayed him into assertions which he does not intend. (Kemp Smith, 1941: 270)

Kemp Smith correctly recognises the inconsistency between Hume's explanation of general ideas and the doctrine of distinction of reason.[55] However, he in fact does not have to criticise Hume, because the distinction of reason is not Hume's own theory but his exegesis of a theory that "is so much talk'd of, and so

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[53] Most fundamentally, moral perception of good and bad is also a classification that is related to human reaction.

[54] Commentators accepting it as Hume's own view include (Butler, 1976; Kemp Smith, 1941; MacNabb, 1966; Bracken, 1984; Waxman, 1994; Garrett, 1997; Broughton, 2000). But Broughton disagrees with Garrett and Waxman regarding Hume's contention (Broughton, 2000: 287, note 13). Bradshaw argues against taking the distinction of reason as a part of Hume's explanation of abstraction (Bradshaw, 1988).

[55] Waxman criticises Kemp Smith that he "failed to realise that resemblances have no intrinsic generality" (Waxman, 1994: 92-93).

little understood, in the schools".[56] Decisive evidence for this interpretation is that the theory propounds a different kind of separation than that found in Hume's separability principle "that all ideas, which are different, are separable."[57]

In the *Treatise* 1.4.4., "Of modern philosophy", Hume stresses the impossibility of separating "movement" from "body". There he attempts to criticise the Lockean distinction between the primary and the secondary qualities. Therefore, the distinction of reason which explains "the distinction betwixt figure and the body figur'd; motion and the body mov'd" cannot be Hume's view. Hume only explains how we come to distinguish between the things that are in fact inseparables. According to Hume,

> when a globe of white marble is presented, we receive only the impression of a white colour dispos'd in a certain form, nor are we able to separate and distinguish the colour from the form. But observing afterwards a globe of black marble and a cube of white, and comparing them with our former object, we find two separate resemblances, in what formerly seem'd, and really is, perfectly inseparable. After a little more practice of this kind, we begin to distinguish the figure from the colour by a *distinction of reason*; that is, we consider the figure and colour together, since they are in effect the same and indistinguishable; but still view them in different aspects, according to the resemblances, of which they are susceptible. (T 1.1.7.18; SBN 25)

This is the secret to how the inseparable are "thought" to be separable. According to Hume, distinction by reason does not indicate a separate idea, but just seeing things from different perspectives.[58] The above passage lends deeper

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[56] For Descartes's discussion of the distinction of reason, see Descartes, 1985: *Principles of Philosophy*, part 1, sects. 60-2.

[57] Stewart clarifies that separability principle is Hume's challenge to the Port-royal Logic, which alleges that which is considered apart in thought does not exist separately in reality. See Stewart, 1994: 124. Garrett argued for the compatibility of the Separability Principle and the discussion of distinction of reason (Garrett, 1997: 62-64).

[58] Janet Broughton claims that the distinction of reason is "Hume's account of our general capacity to recognise the features of things". I agree with Broughton together with the claim that Hume does not explain "how we can recognise the feature of things and the respect in which they resemble one another". Though, I have a different point to emphasise from Broughton; it is Hume's positive claim that he does not have to do so, because resemblance is not based on feature.

significance to Hume's notion of custom and resemblance. It is important to consider whether or not the recognition of resemblance is based on the distinction of reason. The theory of distinction of reason is incompatible with Hume's intention to replace the Lockean abstract ideas with the working of custom. Because Hume replaces the universal or the Lockean abstraction with this concept of resemblance, Hume cannot think that resemblance is based on the distinction of reason.[59] Therefore, resemblance must not be understood as based on any objective feature or an attribute of an object. Recognition of particular features does not serve to classify objects, because no particular feature constitutes the essence of a class of things. If so, the reason why that particular feature is picked up as representing the object is further to be questioned. It is a mistake, for example to think that we can classify things only by their colour because colour itself does not compose the essential feature of any object. Any one objective feature is not enough to identify a class of things, for without that feature it is still possible to regard one thing as belonging to the same class. Therefore, the distinction of reason has nothing to do with the Humean general ideas.

The perception of objects is created as the result of repetitive experiences. This is not a working of the intellect, but of the natural relation of resemblance. Every individual impression and idea represents a point of view from which they are perceived. But no object is recognisable merely by a single perception. This means that no one particular point of view is enough to recognise an object. Hume holds that the association of impressions and ideas does not depend on any particular feature that is perceived. For this reason, simple ideas as well as complex ideas can have different relations with other impressions and ideas. Hume says,

> 'Tis evident, that even different simple ideas may have a similarity or resemblance to each other; nor is it necessary, that the point or circumstance of resemblance shou'd be distinct or separable from that in which they differ. ... 'Tis the same case with particular sounds, and tastes and smells. These admit of infinite resemblance upon the general appearance and comparison, without having any common circumstance

[59] Hume reiterates this critical remark in T 1.4.5.26; SBN 245.

> the same. And of this we may be certain, even from the very abstract terms *simple idea*. They comprehend all simple ideas under them. These resemble each other in their simplicity. And yet from their very nature, which excludes all composition, this circumstance, in which they resemble, is not distinguishable nor separable from the rest. 'Tis the same case with all the degree in any quality. They are all resembling, and yet the quality, in any individual, is not distinct from the degree. (T 1.1.7.7; SBN 637)

Hume puts this paragraph in the second appendix of his *Treatise* obviously in response to possible objections. Hume argues for the "infinite resemblance" between simple ideas in order to refute the universalist interpretation. If simple ideas can resemble other ideas, it is evident that resemblance does not depend on any feature. Hume thinks that there is no objective feature recognizable as an inherent characteristic of things. Things are classified only by resemblance. Let us remember that Hume denigrates the role of reason in moral distinctions. Thus, the distinction of "reason" could not have meant anything positive, but only means something not real. Unlike the theory of distinction of reason, resemblance obtains only between distinct impressions and ideas, and is not based on any feature that allows external description. Resemblance is more fundamental than mere objective perception of sights, sounds, touches, smells or tastes, for resemblance can be perceived even despite the differences of those senses, e.g., we can make sense in saying "warm colour". No two separate objects are exactly the same in nature. Were it not for resemblance, we would have no means to think of even the identity of things. It is such a fundamental principle that other things cannot explain resemblance, but only can be explained by it. Hume refers to the concept of resemblance in every important discussion such as those about causation, the external bodies and personal identity.

In order to confirm that Hume does not think that resemblance is to be found by any objective feature or by distinction of reason, let us consider the decisive examples that he uses to explain custom. The central point that Hume emphasises is that "custom" can work properly even when we do not possess an adequate idea, or when we forget the relevant ideas, or we do not annex distinct and complete ideas to the term.

> I believe every one, who examines the situation of his mind in reasoning, will agree with me, that we do not annex distinct and complete ideas to every term we make use of, and that in talking of *government, church, negotiation, conquest*, we seldom spread out in our minds all the simple ideas, of which these complex ones are compos'd. 'Tis however observable, that notwithstanding this imperfection we may avoid talking nonsense on these subjects, and may perceive any repugnance among the ideas, as well as if we had a full comprehension of them. Thus if instead of saying, *that in war the weaker have always recourse to negotiation*, we shou'd say, *that they always recourse to conquest*, the custom, which we have acquir'd of attributing certain relations to ideas, still follows the words, and makes us immediately perceive the absurdity of that proposition; in the same manner as one particular idea may serve us in reasoning concerning other ideas, however different from it in several circumstances. (T 1.1.7.14; SBN 23)

This should be a surprising example for those who try to think that resemblance consists in some universal feature in things.[60] In fact, Hume reveals here the concrete target of his theory. It is clear that Hume does not assume that resemblance is based on any single component. That is why he had to emphasise that resemblance obtains between simple ideas. Hume does not think that there is a universal feature that causes resemblance, and produces the association. He thinks that it is not even necessary to have distinct and complete ideas to form the custom.[61] This leads us to a consideration of the rule of custom in moral matters. It is decisive for Hume to maintain that things are not classified by their objective features, but by the most fundamental recognition of resemblance, because in human action, there can never be exactly the same perceptions on which the distinction of morality is based. Therefore, moral understanding cannot be elucidated by any universal feature, which is handled by reason. Hume assumes that the discussion of general ideas can be applied also to the impression of reflection. "Virtue" is one of the most significant

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[60] Kemp Smith, rightly from his position, criticises that Hume "naively presupposes abstract ideas" in these examples (Kemp Smith, 1941: 263). Spinoza argues in a similar manner as Hume (Spinoza, 1985: *Ethic*, 2nd part, prop. 18, schol.).

[61] By this theory, Hume is preparing to elucidate the moral understanding that is even more unlikely to be based on any universal feature in the Humean system.

examples of abstract ideas.[62] Virtuous action can take any form or any external description so there is no recognition of virtue by its universal feature.

4. Custom and the General Point of View

The principle of resemblance is founded on the association of different particular perceptions. The Lockean abstraction is replaced in Hume's system with a customary association, which explains how a particular idea can represent other particular ideas. Custom is not founded on any "objective" feature of objects which is detectable by reason, but on the association of perceptions that are naturally arranged via resemblance. It seems curious that "custom", such an important concept in his epistemology, seems to be downplayed in his moral theory even though Hume says the principles he is employing are the same as in Books 1 and 2.[63] On the other hand, it seems strange that the Humean general point of view, central and significant as it is in Hume's moral philosophy, receives very small treatment as to its definition and function.

There is a clear ground for assuming a theoretical connection between custom and the general point of view. First, custom refers to the generality of actions rather than their universality or particularity. Thus, the primary function of custom involves making a "general" recognition as distinct from a universal or particular recognition. Perception necessarily implies a point of view; a particular perception corresponds to a particular point of view. Therefore, to view a particular as representing other resembling particulars signifies what it means to take a general point of view. The general point of view determines how the perceived objects are to be classified. As the principle of association represents generality, Hume replaces the Lockean intellectual process of abstraction with the generality that underlies custom. Throughout his theory, the primary function of Humean perception is to produce a

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[62] Garrett points out a comprehensive significance of abstract ideas in various crucial discussions in the *Treatise* (Garrett, 1997: *passim*).

[63] John Wright points this out to me. As I discuss in later chapters, "convention" plays the most significant role in the theory of justice. I take convention to be based on the concept of custom in Hume's epistemology.

moral and pragmatic, rather than a right or correct recognition. Hume tries to show that "tho' the capacity of the mind be not infinite, yet we can at once form a notion of all possible degree of quantity and quality in such a manner at least, as, however imperfect, may *serve all the purposes of reflexion and conversation* (T 1.1.7.2; SBN 18, italics mine)." Let us consider the following quotation.

> The word raises up an individual idea, along with a certain custom; and that custom produces any other individual one, for which we may have occasion. But as the production of all the ideas, to which the name may be apply'd, is in most cases impossible, we abridge that work by a more partial consideration, and find but few *inconveniences* to arise in our reasoning from that abridgement. (T 1.1.7.7; SBN 20-21, italic mine)

Hume apparently considers abstract ideas in terms of their pragmatic or practical aspect. It is also remarkable that Hume bears in mind the serviceability of custom in making possible the communication among people that is the foundation of morality. Therefore, Humean custom is conceived to be serviceable as the basis of inference and communication. Communication produces a shared perception which is the basis of moral recognition.[64] Hume is convinced that moral perceptions should be the basis of moral behaviour. Unlike the prescriptive moral theory that is concerned with right action, morality in the Humean system concerns the whole spectrum of morality; morality is not something that ought to dominate the human behaviour, but something that is actually serving to drive human realities. Utility and agreeableness are the central characteristics that Hume ascribes to morality, but disutility and disagreeableness must also be communicated because, most of all, the moral understanding has to create and incarnate an agreement among people. This is where the general point of view plays an important role. Hume famously introduces the concept in explaining the fundamental function of moral terms.

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[64] Hume develops the theory of communication in the *Treatise*, Book 2 (see Chapter 5).

> Our situation, with regard both to persons and things, is in continual fluctuation; and a man, that lies at a distance from us, may, in a little time, become a familiar acquaintance. Besides, every particular man has a peculiar position with regard to others; and 'tis impossible we cou'd ever converse together on any reasonable term, were each of us to consider characters and persons, only as they appear from his peculiar point of view. In order, therefore, to prevent those continual *contradictions*, and arrive at a more *stable* judgment of things, we fix on some *steady* and *general* points of view; and always, in our thoughts, place ourselves in them, whatever may be our present situation. (T 3.3.1.15; SBN 581, italic Hume)

It is possible to indicate a parallelism between Hume's explanation of general ideas and our adopting a general point of view. Hume clearly thinks that moral perception consists in an agreement among people. He refers to the general point of view in order to show that moral perception does not directly represent the inherent characteristics of virtuous action; unless an action incurs association with other similar action that are already recognised as moral, the action cannot be conferred any moral evaluation. This is the function of taking the general point of view. The general point of view enables people to view a particular object in a similar manner as other similar objects, focusing on the resembling perceptions independently of the particular personal relation. There is no moral action recognisable that is so completely unique that it incurs no resemblance with another case. Therefore, Humean general ideas and moral perception have in common the characteristic that they are based on association, and serve to create common understanding among people. In order for moral evaluation to function properly, people have to reach an agreement regarding the meaning of an action. Hume's theory of abstract ideas and moral judgement have a theoretical connection, because "virtue", "vice" and other moral terms are abstract ideas that consist in seeing particular human action as a particular instance of a definite moral value. It is impossible to enumerate the features that compose benevolence, tolerance, kindness, courageousness, and so on. Moral evaluation is most appropriately modelled on Hume's general ideas, because

both concern the communicability of opinions.[65] Therefore, it is understandable that Hume deals with the two concepts, custom and the general point of view, with the same line of argument.

5. Concluding Remarks

Broughton, after asserting that Hume's account of general terms is not "a fully successful one" indicates the problem as follows. According to her,

> It is not clear whether Hume thinks our associative powers are activated simply by repetition of resembling impression-contents, or whether he thinks that recognizing the resemblance of repeated features is required as well. (Broughton, 2000: 287)

My argument above has clarified that resemblance does not depend on any feature of objects. Hume holds that the function of recognising resemblance is fundamental to human nature. If resemblance is based on any feature that is recognised by reason, then the relation between the feature and the object has further to be questioned. The Lockean difficulty as to the first ground for identifying the feature that signified an object turns Hume into his criticism. Hume by consciously recognising resemblance as the primitive relation puts a period to the quandary. However, he by no means holds that resemblance has no cognitive ground. Resemblance activates our associative power that forms custom. That one thing resembles other things means we associate them in a practical manner. In this sense, resemblance is not a matter of what the features of objects are like, but what association is created in the human mind.

David MacNabb once held that "Hume's views on abstract ideas do not play such a fundamental part in his system as Berkeley's rather similar views do in his. (MacNabb, 1966: 33)" Far from it, "Of Abstract Ideas" contains the most fundamental principle in the *Treatise*. It is a theory for explaining how perceptions

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[65] Incidentally, the basic function of sympathy is to enable people to share the same feelings with

come to be internalised and humanised to give human meaning to external perceptions. This serves as a foundation to create a human world. As I have argued, it defines the Humean concept of custom. All the important further development in the *Treatise* relies on custom implying an association of ideas. For example, it is noticeable that Hume's theory of causation is an extension of the concept of custom as an associative principle, in which resemblances between constant conjunctions of objects make us take one as the cause of the other.

I have argued that taking the general point of view can be understood in the same manner that custom makes a particular idea into a general idea. Taking a general point of view is implied in the formation of custom as a natural process, because this is the manner in which we understand the meaning of particular impressions. This also applies to our moral perception. The remarkable parallelism between Hume's explanation of general ideas and his explanation of the general point of view can be taken as evidence that Hume's epistemology gives a foundation to his moral theory.

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each other regardless of their personal situation (see Chapter 5).

Chapter Three:

The Humean Theory of Belief and Causation: A Moral Reading

Introduction

Both belief and causation are incontrovertibly central concepts in the history of philosophy. Causation is no doubt the most frequently discussed among many topics contained in the *Treatise*, and sits at the centre of his whole system. Usually the Humean theory of causation is discussed with exclusively epistemological concerns. Little effort has been made to connect it with the rest of Hume's philosophy.[66] However, since Hume's overall objective lies in establishing a moral theory, treating Hume's concept of causation exclusively from the contemporary interest in epistemology is gravely misleading in that it ignores the context into which Hume brings the argument. The objective of this chapter is to show the direct significance of Hume's theory of causation as a fundamental part of his moral theory.

One preconception keeps Hume commentators from understanding the significance of his theory of causation; it is the preconception that Hume's theory of causation is all about the relation between two events. In this chapter, I attempt to prove that it is a theory about the quality of an object. I explain that Hume's theory of causation is a theory of belief, and that Hume deals with causation exclusively as a matter of human belief rather than as a quality of objects themselves. My view is that Hume's theory of causation as belief explains his fundamental concept of normativity. I argue that the concept of general point of view functions as the key principle in causation and in producing our beliefs.

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[66] K. B. Price concludes that "Although Hume's theory of knowledge does not imply his ethical theory, it does imply the negation or meaninglessness of others" (Price, 1995: 11). In recent Hume literature, the focus of the debate is whether or not Hume is a causal realist (cf. Read and Kenneth (eds.), 2000).

In section 1, I propose that Hume's theory of causation should particularly be understood as a theory of belief. I explain that Hume's concept of belief can be construed as a pragmatic concept, and that causation is viewed as a means to obtain beliefs. In section 2, I reconsider Hume's definition of belief, and argue that Hume's concept of belief is analogous to the concept of moral sentiment, which consists in the general point of view. In section 3, I argue that Hume's theory of causation replaces the Lockean concept of power. In section 4, I examine the relation between the natural definition and the philosophical definition of cause, and explain Hume's view why they signify different views of the same situation. In section 5, I criticise the view which takes Hume as a causal realist, in order to indicate the moral significance of Hume's theory of causation.

1. The Importance of Belief

Arguably, there is a link between Hume's "the general point of view" and his concept of custom. As we have seen in the last chapter, Locke's concept of abstract ideas is substituted by custom in Hume's explanation of generality. Generality is a persistent theme in Humean theory; it is at once a principle of human understanding and a ground for moral justification; particular impressions and ideas obtain meaning when they are placed in a general association with each other.[67]

Although we receive only particular impressions from experience, it is obvious that our understanding of the world is not exclusively composed of particulars. Our mental capacity cannot retain an infinite number of particulars as they are in themselves. We cannot assign a "term" to a particular idea unless we place it in general association with other ideas which it resembles. In accordance with his project of transforming the Lockean substance-centred system into his relation-centred system, Hume takes full advantage of the generality that is produced

[67] Furthermore the relation between the particular and the general presents a model for understanding the relationship between the individual and the society. I will argue this problem in Chapter 6.

out of particulars.[68] Imagination associates ideas through resemblances, contiguity and causation. It is important to understand Hume regards causation as involved in the creation of generality.

According to Hume, the relation of cause and effect is at once among the three natural relations, and among the seven philosophical relations. Moreover, Hume stresses that causation is "the most extensive (T 1.1.4.4; SBN 12)", and the unique relation "that can be trac'd beyond our senses, and informs us of existences and objects, which we do not see or feel" (T 1.3.2.3; SBN 74). Let us clarify more specifically the significance Hume finds in causation. This question is crucial for understanding the centrality of causation in Hume's *Treatise*. What is the significance of Hume's argument about causation in his moral theory? A key to this question seems to lie in the noteworthy fact that Hume discusses causation as probability together with his theory of belief which is another of his crucial concepts.

In the main stream of western philosophy since Plato, belief (*doxa*) has been allocated an importance second to knowledge (*episteme*).[69] Also in the context of British philosophy, Locke tries to define belief as a supplement to knowledge (Passmore, 1980: 185-208; Wolterstorff, 1996: *passim*); he tries to indicate a way of making belief closer to a state of knowledge. Hume's innovation in moral philosophy lies in his rediscovery of the particular significance of belief as distinct from knowledge. Causation is important as a mechanism for achieving beliefs; as causation shows the efficacy of an object called cause, we can obtain a belief in the quality of objects by causation. Furthermore, Hume regards opinion as a kind of belief. (cf. T 1.3.7.5; SBN 96).[70]

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[68] Don Garrett claims that Hume's causation takes "events" rather than "substances" as the most fundamental relata. However, in my opinion, Hume's central task is to elucidate the structure of causal events which he analyses in terms of the perceiver and the object. As I clarify in the following, causation is a product of custom that is a series of events, thus relational in its nature. Therefore, it seems legitimate to call the Humean causation the relation-centred system (Garret, 1997: Ch. 6).

[69] Peter Jones indicates that Cicero emphasises that probability should be the guide to life (Jones, 1985: 34).

[70] As Locke identifies belief with assent, this signifies that Hume's theory of belief implies a criticism of the social contract theory because, as a critic of the social contract theory. Hume criticises Locke's theory of belief as the basis of the formation of political society by presenting his own theory.

Let us highlight the significance of belief in moral philosophy by considering the cases of Hobbes and Locke. Very concisely put, Hobbes thinks that man can live long and with industry only where there is peace prevailing in society. Only the sovereign can guarantee the peace. Therefore, according to Hobbes, man must obey the order of the sovereign, which is the rationalised form of desire for life. For Hobbes, the most important thing for human survival is to follow the order of the sovereign as a rational *desire*. On the other hand, Locke thinks that man can live a good life where there is rule by natural law. Therefore, according to Locke, man must find and obey the natural law that is given as certain knowledge through reason. For Locke, the most important thing for human life is to follow the morality based on *reason*. In contrast to these and other philosophers, Hume thinks that men can lead a good life by coping well with their natural and human circumstances. And the necessary way of doing so is to obtain beliefs about them, as Hume observes beliefs are the means by which people lead their daily life. Therefore, for Hume the most important thing for human life is to have appropriate *beliefs*. In this case, people do not obey their beliefs for any moral reason nor is it their direct moral duty to obey them. In fact, human beings naturally follow their beliefs because they have no other means to interact with their circumstance. Their belief determines how they behave toward their environment, physical, human, and social.

For Hume, a social order is not attained by the conscious agreement of people; social order is attainable where people have appropriate beliefs regarding their social circumstances. On the other hand, it is impossible to attain peace and order where people have inappropriate principles, which bring them into conflict with each other. Hume thinks that what is usually called immoral action is in fact a natural outcome of a false belief; beliefs that tend to cause immoral action are produced from a perspective that lacks generality. Therefore, the moral perspective has to assume a generality to be valid. And that is why the general point of view serves as a moral point of view (cf. Cohon, 1997; Blackburn, 1998a: Ch. 7).

We need to attain a social order because man apparently cannot live happily in social disorder. Order is the objective of nature. Social order must be protected. This is the ideal Hobbes and Locke directly aim to attain. In this case, their theories do not exclude the possibility of attaining peace through non-peaceful means. In the

case of Hobbes, absolute obedience to the dictates of the sovereign may cause this kind of undesirable situation. In Locke, the right to resist may permit men to resort to a violent means to pursue justice, which is again a necessary evil that can only be justified by its final objective. In the Humean perspective, however, these are regarded as serious defects that occur as a result of their separation of the final cause from the efficient cause for attaining it.[71] Hume sees that natural beliefs serve to show the way to avoid harmful consequences. The presence of smooth interaction with the environment already foretells the presence of a moral order. Even the most rational prescription for attaining a perfect order cannot be implemented without being adopted as a general basis for human behaviour.

Hume recognises that the manner in which people deal with their moral circumstances cannot be different from how we cope with our physical surroundings, because in both cases human beings cannot but act except with the same natural faculties. This is why Hume says,

> I shall only observe before I proceed any farther, that tho' the ideas of cause and effect be deriv'd from the impressions of reflection as well as from those of sensation, yet for brevity's sake, I commonly mention only the latter as the origin of these ideas; tho' I desire that whatever I say of them may also extend to the former. Passions are connected with their objects and with one one another; no less than external bodies are connected together. The same relation, then, of cause and effect, which belongs to one, must be common to all of them. (T 1.3.2.16; SBN 78)

Moral understanding cannot be totally different from our understanding of the physical world if we use the same human capacities in both matters. Hume's strategy is to use the former as the model for the latter, for we are more unlikely to make mistakes in our perception of the physical world because there nature guides us with a stronger force.

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[71] This appears to be Hume's constant perspective, for he applies the same perspective in his criticism of natural religion in DNR.

Hume thinks that belief is serviceable for producing human behaviour. For thousands of years before civilisation, human beings have had no means but beliefs that are accumulated in the form of convention and custom as our guides for behaviour; otherwise we could not have been able to survive thus far. Hume understands that the situation remains essentially the same. It is vital for us to have understanding beyond simple present perceptions. It would certainly be beyond our imagination how much we owe to the natural process that nature has equipped us with. Belief provides us with a chart of the world. Suppose we were never sure whether fire produces heat or coolness, each time we perceived fire, or whether that particular wall is penetrable or not. If we had to examine every object in every situation without any preconception, we would not be able to take even one step forward without great troubles. Hume always attempts to begin theorising from the fundamental requirements of the human world, and his theory of perception has a practical implication as the foundation for human behaviour.

In epistemic terms, human beings are placed in a quandary; we always face new circumstances, and the only impressions available are those present. In other words, human beings only have past ideas and present impressions to confront the new and future needs. But how is it possible for us to cope well with new circumstances? It is obvious that we must infer from our present impression to its future course. This is what the relation of cause and effect gives us. It cannot be certain knowledge, for it might be wrong. With the help of belief we can think of the manner with which to deal with new objects and new circumstances. In this way, belief is a means to having an adequate relationship with our circumstances. Hence Hume defines belief as a lively idea related to an impression.[72]

Belief is different both from present impressions and from mere memories. The characteristic of belief is that it is beyond particular perception. Therefore, there must be a special mechanism that provides us with belief. Moreover, there must be a standard to distinguish true belief from false. If no belief is exact, what is the standard of true belief? Hume thinks that true belief serves as a basis of our behaviour, in order to produce a better situation, while false belief is a mere fiction.

This is the problem of causal belief. The function of causal belief is to inform us about the probability concerning future events. Hume's theory of causation explains why we can behave with a sense of assurance in belief. Hume treats causal belief as the model of moral belief, because both represent the quality of an object/person under observation.[73] This indicates that there is a principle that is common to belief, causation and morality.[74]

2. The Humean Belief and the General Point of View

Hume's theory of belief appears as a puzzle to some commentators (e.g. Hodge and Lachs, 1995; Pflaum, 1995; Costa, 1995; Gorman, 1993). There seems to be two points to be clarified in order to attain a fuller understanding of the Humean concept of belief. The first point is concerned with the definition of belief; Hume seems to provide different definitions from time to time, and even says that belief is indefinable. And the second point is concerned with the justification of belief; what distinguishes justified belief from false belief? These two problems are interrelated and a careful consideration of the first will serve to clarify the second.

Let us consider the problem of definition first. Hume has been accused of giving an inconsistent definition to belief. For example, Hodge and Lachs assert regarding the definition of belief that "the plain and apparently unnoticed fact is that Hume contradicts himself."[75] According to them, Hume is contradicting himself because he gives a definition of belief and then denies the possibility of defining it. One definition is what Gorman names "feeling theory" that "An opinion, therefore,

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[72] Hume's definition of belief will be examined below.

[73] As Jane McIntyre points out, there is a parallelism between Hume's theories of character and causation (McIntyre, 1990).

[74] Hume has obviously chosen to discuss causation also for examining Christian theory with all its moral and political implications. His discussion regarding the difference between thinking about and believing in God means more than just an example (T 1.3.7.2; SBN 94). Hume's innovation is to use the argument that was used for the demonstration of the existence of God for the opposite purpose; Hume used it for explaining how human beings (rather than God) can exist (cf. Livingston, 1995: 482-95).

[75] According to them, the reason is that Hume gives a clear definition in the *Treatise* and denies the possibility of definition in the *Enquiry*.

or belief may be most accurately defin'd A LIVELY IDEA RELATED TO OR ASSOCIATED WITH A PRESENT IMPRESSION" (T 1.3.7.5; SBN 96).

In his discussion of belief, Hume first asks a leading question; "*Wherein consists the difference betwixt incredulity and belief?*" (T 1.3.7.3; SBN 95). It is possible to say that throughout the *Treatise*, Hume persistently catechises this question, and places his answer to it as the cornerstone of his edifice. This is of course a question that Locke also attempts to address when he distinguishes sound belief from enthusiasm. There is a parallelism between Hume's definitions of causation, belief, and moral sentiment; they all consist in the particular feeling.[76] In his theory of morals, Hume tries to find the distinction between moral sentiments and non-moral sentiments in a particular feeling that though indefinable by words, can clearly be felt. In a similar sense, Hume thinks that belief is defined by a particular feeling that is characterised by the "manner" an idea is entertained. Let me quote at some length.

> This operation of mind, which forms the belief of any matter of facts, seems hitherto to have been one of the greatest mysteries of philosophy; tho' no one has so much as suspected, that there was any difficulty in explaining it. For my part I must own, that I find a considerable difficulty in the case; and that even when I think I understand the subject perfectly, I am at a loss for a term to express my meaning. I conclude, by an induction which seems to me very evident, that an opinion or belief is nothing but an idea, that is different from a fiction, not in the nature, or the order of its parts, but in the *manner* of its being conceiv'd. But when I wou'd explain this *manner*, I scarce find any word that fully answers the case, but am oblig'd to have recourse to every one's feeling, in order to give him a perfect notion of this operation of the mind. An idea assented to *feels* different from a fictitious idea, that the fancy alone present to us: and this different feeling I endeavour to explain by calling it a superior *force*, or *vivacity*,

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[76] This theme is repeated in his theory of morality. Let us remember the passage from his discussion of morals, "An action, or sentiment, or character is virtuous or vicious; why? because its view causes a pleasure or uneasiness of a particular kind. In giving a reason, therefore, for the pleasure or uneasiness, we sufficiently explain the vice or virtue. To have the sense of virtue is nothing but to *feel* a satisfaction of a particular kind from the contemplation of a character. The very *feeling* constitutes our praise or admiration. We go no further; nor do we enquire into the cause of the satisfaction" (T 3.1.2.3; SBN 471). In his theory of morals, this particular feeling is supposed to be obtained in taking a general point of view.

> or *solidity*, or *firmness*, or *steadiness*. This variety of terms, which may seem so unphilosophical, is intended only to express that act of the mind, which renders realities more present to us than fictions, causes them to weigh more in thought, and gives them a superior influence on the passion and imagination. (T 1.3.7.7; SBN 629)

Hodge and Lachs take this passage as Hume's denial of the definition. However, this definition should be considered to supplement his first definition that belief is a lively and vivid idea accompanied by the present impression. The important point to note is that belief is characterised by its manner rather than by its content; he stresses that belief is different from mere fiction by the manner in which it is being conceived; any idea can become belief by the manner it is entertained. This is the Humean formalism of perceptions.[77] It is a matter of contingency what kind of belief one entertains, but it is inevitable that one entertains some kind of belief to lead his behaviour so far as he engages in conscious activities. Although Hume does not seem to specify the manner of conceiving belief, I would argue that he has in mind his definition of moral sentiments as a particular feeling taken from the general point of view. The common denominator between beliefs and moral sentiments is among other things "solidity", "firmness", and "steadiness".[78]

Hume emphasises that the concept of belief cannot completely be expressed by theoretical terms; belief is not defined by its contents but only by the manner of feeling in which it is expressed. This implies a criticism of the Lockean theory that has reason guide one's belief. Hume abandons the idea of evaluating beliefs by reason as Locke did in trying to render belief more reasonable. For Locke the criterion for finding a right belief is whether it is reasonable or not. He asserts that by using reason properly, we can and should obtain a reasonable belief (*Essay* 4.15-6).

Therefore, Hume's negative remarks about reason can be interpreted as a constructive proposal; belief is distinguished from mere fiction by its causal implications, and both its origin and its working are involved in causation. Because

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[77] This is understood as a counter idea of the Kantian formalism which regards morality as consisting in the "form" of universality of a maxim, rather than in its "material".

[78] At the same time, it is also obvious that Hume had this definition in mind when he used the concept of general point of view in Book 3 of the *Treatise*.

causality is not an idea, belief is not a mere idea, either. It requires a commitment of human beings for its existence. Ideas and beliefs are semantically the same, but beliefs refer to the human commitment that is causal, and signifies something other than semantic description.

Hume's theory of belief fundamentally intends to explain human behaviour. No moral theory is valid, according to the Humean idea, if the theory does not signify a natural principle that enables human beings to partake in its process. To acquire belief means to obtain a stable manner of behaviour in respect to the same type of objects. This is why human beings can fare well in ever changing circumstances, and therefore, this is the secret of the adaptation of human lives to their surroundings. Hume says,

> I find, that an impression, from which, on its first appearance, I can draw no conclusion, may afterwards become the foundation of belief, when I have had experience of its usual consequences. ... Now as we call everything CUSTOM, which proceeds from a past repetition, without any new reasoning or conclusion, we may establish it as a certain truth, that all the belief, which follows upon any present impression, is deriv'd solely from that origin. (T 1.3.8.9-10; SBN 102)

Hume clarifies the essential connection between belief and custom. An object is regarded as a cause when it is placed in a relationship that is determined by a repetition of experiences. The same object is not regarded as a cause of another object if it is not related to it by custom. For example, fire can be regarded as a cause of heat, but it is not usually regarded as a cause of coolness, although it can be a cause of coolness when, for example, it is used to fuel an air conditioner in some way. Furthermore, in order to understand fire as a cause of heat, one has to repeatedly place oneself in a certain perspective (as opposed to doing logical reasoning), expose oneself to the view given by it, and trace the association of ideas that connect fire with heat. This is what it means to take a general point of view. This process occurs only customarily in most cases where simple physical responses are concerned. This is the secret of why taking the general point of view is not mentioned in Hume's theory of belief; it is, so to speak, hidden because it is assimilated as a natural

process. When one regards fire as the cause of heat, one is, without any act of reasoning, taking a general point of view. This sense of naturalness is the condition of the "particular feeling" which convinces us that the connection is real. This conviction is to be distinguished from the sense that the idea is "true". Thus the general point of view serves as the Humean alternative to the Cartesian criterion of the "clear and distinct". Hume intends to replace the truth of reason with causal validity as the criterion of human behaviour for showing the priority of good over right.

If belief is known only by reason, the belief may not be based on reality. And a merely consistent idea can lead to a conflict with other merely consistent ideas without any arbitrator other than the sense of personal convictions. Therefore, it is possible to indicate a plausible reason why Hume had to modify his initial definition of belief, that it is known by a vivid feeling: if belief is defined only as a vivid feeling, it can include a strong but false conviction such as superstition or enthusiasm.[79] This contradicts his intention of showing the standard to distinguish genuine belief from false belief. The central point of his initial definition is that reality and fiction are distinguished not by any content, but by the feeling that is peculiar only to the former. Therefore, unlike the allegation of Hodge and Lachs, Hume's denial of the definability of belief should be understood as a positive assertion that belief is different from reason. It is logically possible to have unnatural or inconvenient beliefs such as fire is the cause of coolness. Hume only warns us that it will cost us. Hume tells us; "If we believe, that fire warms, or water refreshes, 'tis only because it costs us too much pains to think otherwise" (T 1.4.7.11; SBN 270). In this way, Hume's theory of causation aims to make us aware of this significant fact of human nature.

> Impressions always actuate the soul, and that in the highest degree; but 'tis not every idea which has the same effect. Nature has

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[79] John Passmore argues that Hume "*does* want to destroy superstition; if philosophy is often ridiculous, so he tells us, superstition is both ridiculous and dangerous. That is precisely what leads him to write as if it is both possible and desirable to stand back from our vivid ideas, to decide, in certain circumstances, not to count them amongst our beliefs" (Passmore, 1980: 175).

> proceeded with caution in this case, and seems to have carefully avoided the inconveniences of two extremes. Did impression alone influence the will, we should every moment of our lives be subject to the greatest calamities; because, tho' we foresaw their approach, we should not be provided by nature with any principle of action, which might impel us to avoid them. On the other hand, did every idea influence our actions, our condition would not be much mended. For such is the unsteadiness and activity of thought, that the images of every thing, especially of goods and evils, are always wandering in the mind; and were it mov'd by every idle conception of this kind, it would never enjoy a moment's peace and tranquillity.
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> Nature has, therefore, chosen a medium, and has neither bestow'd on every idea of good and evil the power of actuating the will, nor yet has entirely excluded them from this influence. (T 1.3.10.2-3; SBN 118-119)

This is a penetrating view not only about the nature of belief but also about its significance. Hume points out that beliefs enable us to take distance from direct course of nature, while fixing us to reality, and thus are a means for "peace and tranquillity". Beliefs are the medium between impressions and ideas, adopting the advantages of both, and tempering both of their disadvantages. Beliefs have an influencing force of impression, and at the same time they have the generality of ideas. It is noticeable that this explanation is parallel to Hume's "general ideas" as a combination of particularity and generality. That both abstract ideas and beliefs are mediated by custom is additional evidence for considering that belief is a particular impression seen from the general point of view. The vivid and lively feeling accompanying beliefs is derived from the sense of reality that composes its central part. Because causation is the determination of the mind as a result of repetitive experiences of resembling objects, a point of view that unifies those individual experiences must exist, which is the general point of view.

Now let us turn to the question how Hume thinks it is possible to distinguish true beliefs from false ones. In Locke, true belief is equivalent to a rational judgement that is well-supported by clear evidence. But Locke is frustrated because

he cannot show how much evidence is required by "rationality".[80] Hume follows a different line of thought from Locke. Hume's objective is to distinguish genuine belief from mere fiction. It sounds good, as Locke advises, to make our belief more reasonable. However, Hume understands this as just a metaphor, because belief is different in its origin from reason, and cannot literally be made "reasonable". For Hume, false belief, so called, is mere fiction or credulity. Any situation must support some belief when it is seen from the general point of view. All beliefs are, so long as they are in accordance with the definition, valid not because they are true but because they constitute reality, and reality is not a matter of true or false.

Then, a problem seems to arise: how can the conflict between beliefs be resolved, which we experience in our social and political life? Hume's answer would be that the general point of view will produce a new belief that is less contradicting than either of the original two. The resolution should arise from the point of view that comprehends the most general qualities of the situation. Genuine beliefs are products of our experiences of reality, and cannot be products of independent judgement. If beliefs appear contradictory, it is because they are simultaneously seen from different points of view. The general point of view solves the problem of contradicting beliefs by being a perspective for producing a more comprehensive belief about the object. This is nothing extraordinary, but simply a Humean description of the reality of moral perception of ordinary good persons. The general point of view will not instantly solve all moral conflicts, however, as our reality shows us. This is because the existence of such different views and opinions among many individuals is the original fact of our life, and the function of morality is to reduce the conflict. We always have more experiences and impressions from which to create the general point of view. This dialectical process is the progress of sentiments.[81] Those moral problems should ultimately be settled through the procedures that are established in society, which again represents the general point of view. The important thing is to stick to the real nature of our belief, and to refrain

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[80] Passmore claims that this is the background that makes Locke turn to tolerance (Passmore, 1980: 204).

from indulging in mere fiction. By elucidating the nature of genuine belief, Hume shows the criterion of real belief, and rejects other pseudo moral formula such as religious enthusiasm, political ideologies, or hedonistic calculation, *etc*..

3. Causation and the General Point of View

It should be clear by now that Hume's theory of causation is a theory for clarifying the nature of causal belief. It is true that one of the fundamental projects of modern philosophy is to examine the legitimacy of scientific knowledge. But Hume's intention is not to ground an absoluteness of scientific knowledge, certainly not one that obtains only as a hypothesis in an idealised condition. Nor does Hume mean that necessity understood as a psychological phenomenon denies a scientific theory of causation. He denies the idea that causal power exists in the object of cause; if causal power exists in the object, it cannot explain the fact that one object exerts different effects.[82] Hume's aim is to establish the concept of causation itself for human beings and clarify its bearings on human life. For example, it is certain that no one will "put his hand into the fire and hold it there till it be consumed" (EHU 8.20; SBN 91). This does not deny the fact that someone in some situation may do so, for doing this does not entail logical contradiction. Hume's point is that there exists a point of view for believing that putting one's hand in a fire until it is consumed is abnormal. If not for the human fact that we need a strong sense of reliability upon which to base behaviour, an understanding of causal relations would not be necessary. Because Hume's belief originates from experiences, belief can belong in reality. Appropriate belief accompanies the sense of fitness to reality, which evokes the notion of design or providence.

However, even an extremely thorough investigation of an object is not enough to discover how it relates to other entities. Experience is the only guide in human behaviour. An object's relation to other objects is unknown until it is actually

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[81] This line of thought can lead to a Hegelian theory. Although Hegel's connection with the Scottish Enlightenment is usually traced to Adam Smith, the similarity between Hegel and Hume seems to be more conspicuous (cf. Berry, 1982; Pompa, 1990).

[82] This is the same argument he uses in his theory of "pride" and "humility" (see Chapter 5, part 1).

placed into interaction. After having been placed in a relation with another object, an object produces a different appearance in addition to the original one. For example, a flame may first be perceived just as a reddish flicker of light, but after experiencing its proximity to skin, a flame is recognised as having heat. This means that our perception of the flame has obtained a richer content by virtue of experience. Thus, the role of causation is to inform us of the quality of an object, especially regarding how it reacts to other objects when placed in relation to them. In fact, the recognition of the qualities of an object is nothing but the recognition of its relation to other objects. In this sense, Humean theory represents a relation-centred system.[83]

Thus, causation is the major source of our belief not only of the relation between two separate impressions, but also of the quality we perceive in objects. The concept of power comes to the centre of Locke's theory.[84] Therefore, it is possible to say that Hume's major intention is to criticise Locke's concept of quality and power. Although Locke's distinction between the primary and the secondary qualities is notoriously obscure, Locke understands power as a cause inherent in object that produces qualities. In 'Of the idea of necessary connexion', Hume reiterates his criticism of the Lockean notion of power. For example, he says,

> I begin with observing that the terms of *efficacy, agency, power, force, energy, necessity, connexion*, and *productive quality*, are all nearly synonymous; and therefore 'tis an absurdity to employ any of them in defining the rest. By this observation we reject at once all the vulgar definitions, which philosophers have given of power and efficacy; and instead of searching for the idea in these definitions, must look for it in the impressions, from which it is originally deriv'd. (T 1.3.14.4; SBN 157)

Therefore, Hume's theory of necessary connection purports to explain the concepts of efficacy, power, and agency among others. It is important to note that these concepts represent the active principle of an object, which at the same time

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[83] It has to do with Hume's almost gestalt-psychological method of seeing an object in contrast to its background, or in its entire context.

presupposes the independent existence of the object. Thus, Hume's theory of causation prepares us for the theory of external body.[85] Usually vulgar people assume that qualities of an object are inherent to the object. But Hume challenges this assumption because there is no knowing the quality of an object apart from the perception of its relation. Hume's point is that the quality of an object is not inherent in the object itself, but custom attributes the quality to it through the perception of its customary relation. This is not a negative argument; Hume tries to clarify the human dimension of an object. The Lockean "power" is the counterpart of the Humean "cause". It is possible to consider that they represent two perspectives of an object. Locke's concept of power represents the perspective of an agent, and Hume's concept of cause represents the perspective of an observer.[86] This underlies Hume's constructivist turn. As he begins the discussion of causation, Hume declares his methodology of philosophy. He says,

> To begin regularly, we must consider the idea of *causation,* and see from what origin it is deriv'd. 'Tis impossible to reason justly, without understanding perfectly the idea concerning which we reason; and 'tis impossible perfectly to understand any idea, without tracing it up to its origin, and examining that primary impression, from which it arises. The examination of the impression bestows clearness on the idea; and the examination of the idea bestows a like clearness on all our reasoning. (T 1.3.2.4; SBN 75)

Tracing the origin of an idea is Hume's typical method of clarifying its essence, thus being true to his empiricist premises. Hume thinks that the origin of ideas is in the impression of the object that lies in the mind of the perceiver, while Locke thinks that the idea originates in the object. As we have an idea of causation, there must be some impression that originates it. The search continues until he finds an impression that produces the concept. Hume looks for the impression that

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[84] It is clearly the Locke's plan to establish the free will of the person as a natural right, which is also Hume's target of critique.

[85] Kenneth Winkler denies taking causal realism as an inevitable belief, *unlike* external bodies (Winkler, 1991: 562). I agree with Winkler in denying the realism interpretation of causation. But as I argue in next chapter, the belief in external bodies is as inevitable as the belief in causation.

[86] I discuss the problem of perspective in Hobbes, Locke and Hume in Chapter 6.

produces the idea of cause, and characteristically indicates a problem: that is, that he cannot discover the very impression that is supposed to produce the idea of causation. He says,

> Let us therefore cast our eye on any two objects, which we call cause and effect, and turn them on all sides, in order to find that impression, which produces an idea of such prodigious consequence. At first sight I perceive, that I must not search for it in any of the particular *qualities* of the objects; since, which-ever of these qualities I pitch on, I find some object, that is not possest of it, and yet falls under the denomination of cause and effect. And indeed there is nothing existent, either externally or internally, which is not to be consider'd either as a cause or an effect: tho' 'tis plain there is no one quality, which universally belongs to all beings, and gives them a title to that denomination. (T 1.3.2.5; SBN 75)

In this way, Hume confirms the fact that there is no impression corresponding to cause because any object can become a cause of something without contradiction. Therefore, we do not receive the impression of cause from any object.[87] In other words, any object can logically cause any effect. By denying the impression that corresponds to cause, Hume concludes that the idea "of causation must be deriv'd from some *relation* among objects" (T 1.3.2.6; SBN 75).[88] He examines the relation of two objects that are regarded as cause and effect. He finds that the objects are "*contiguous*" (*ibid.*), and that "PRIORITY of time in the cause before the effect" (T 1.3.2.7; SBN 76) is essential, because if there is any intervention between the occurrence of two objects, the first one is not the solo cause of the second, and if the concomitance of the cause and effect is asserted, its consequence would be "the utter annihilation of time" (*ibid.*). Only these two phenomena are observable in the instance of causal relation. However, this is not enough to make sense of causation. Hume pretends to be at a loss, and says,

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[87] Arguably, there seems to be an inherent connection between the working of causation and that of sympathy; sympathy can take any feeling as its object (see Chapter 5).
[88] This will lead to the "philosophical relation".

> Shall we then rest contented with these two relations of contiguity and succession, as affording a complete idea of causation? By no means. An object may be contiguous and prior to another, without being consider'd as its cause. There is a NECESSARY CONNEXION to be taken into consideration; and that relation is of much greater importance, than any of the other two above-mention'd. (T 1.3.2.11; SBN 77)

Here, Hume indicates the essence of causation is a "necessary connexion" in addition to the two phenomena above mentioned. It is interesting to examine how Hume comes to regard necessary connection as the core element of causation. Hume resorts to his characteristic pattern of reasoning; he takes a detour by asking two further questions, rather than giving a direct answer to this question. Hume formulates them as follows.

> *First*, For what reason we pronounce it *necessary*, that every thing whose existence has a beginning, shou'd also have a cause?
>
> *Secondly*, Why we conclude, that such particular causes must necessarily have such particular effects; and what is the nature of that *inference* we draw from the one to the other, and of the *belief* we repose in it? (T 1.3.2.14-15; SBN 78)

In answering these questions, Hume develops an interesting argument to refute the theories of other philosophers. He says,

> To begin with the first question concerning the necessity of a cause: 'Tis a general maxim in philosophy, that *whatever begins to exist, must have a cause of existence*. This is commonly taken for granted in all reasoning, without any proof given or demanded. 'Tis suppos'd to be founded on intuition, and to be one of those maxims, which tho' they may be deny'd with the lips, 'tis impossible for men in their hearts really to doubt of. But if we examine this maxim by the idea of knowledge above-explain'd, we shall discover in it no mark of any such intuitive certainty; but on the contrary shall find, that 'tis of a nature quite foreign to that species of conviction. (T 1.3.3.1; SBN 78-79)

So, it is not Hume himself but other philosophers and the people in general who claim the necessity of cause.[89] Causation is not proven but just presupposed. Hume's task is to question where in the first place the presupposition comes from.[90] It is not correct to hold that Hume denies causation and idiosyncratically ascribes it to the psychological quality of necessity. Hume does not deny causality but acknowledges it as the undeniable form of human belief. Human beings are naturally compelled to see the quality of an object in the form of cause and effect because this is the framework of their understanding the world. Belief and causation are two sides of a coin. Causation is undeniable to the extent that human beings have to rely upon belief in their natural behaviour.

Then, how do we come to acquire the idea? Or "*[h]ow experience gives rise to such a principle*?"(T 1.3.3.9; SBN 82) Hume makes a remarkable reformulation of the question that "*Why we conclude, that such particular causes must necessarily have such particular effects, and why we form an inference from one to another?*" (T 1.3.3.9; SBN 82) Causation concerns inference, and "right" inferences regarding facts must be accompanied by the "sense" of necessity paradoxically because the inference regarding facts is not in fact necessary. This is a crucial step that Hume locates the origin of our causal reasoning in experience. Hume says,

> We remember to have had frequent instances of the existence of one species of objects; and also remember, that the individuals of another species of objects have always attended them, and have existed in a regular order of contiguity and succession with regard to them. ... Without any further ceremony, we call the one *cause* and the other *effect*, and infer the existence of the one from that of the other.
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> Thus in advancing we have insensibly discover'd a new relation betwixt cause and effect, when we least expected it, and were entirely employ'd upon another subject. This relation is their CONSTANT CONJUNCTION. Contiguity and succession are not sufficient to make us pronounce any two objects to be cause and effect, unless we perceive, that these two relations are preserv'd in several

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[89] Typically, philosophers resort to this theory in the cosmological argument for the existence of God.

[90] As we shall see, this attitude is also found in his discussion of the existence of external bodies (see Chapter 4).

> instances. We may see the advantage of quitting the direct survey of this relation, in order to discover the nature of that *necessary connexion*, which makes so essential a part of it. (T 1.3.6.2,3; SBN 87)

In this way, Hume specifies the relations that produce causation to be contiguity, succession and most of all "constant conjunction". Repeated experiences influence the tendency of our mind that transits from one object to another with the working of imagination. The natural transition of mind from one object to another is possible because of the working of custom. Forming a custom is inseparable from taking a general point of view, because seeing two events as causation implies a point of view. In this way, Hume explicates the manner in which we acquire the idea of causation without resorting to the impression which corresponds to it. This is his strategy precisely because there cannot be an impression that corresponds to cause.[91] Hume clarifies that there is no impression of cause but that causation consists in the manner of seeing an object in association with its usual attendant. This is an original creation of mind which functions as the basis of the idea of causation. Both causation and custom are equally products of accumulated experiences, and therefore consist in their association that is represented by the general point of view. In this way, Hume's theory of causation consists in the formation of the general point of view.

4. Relation of the Two Definitions of Causes

As is well known, Hume supplies two definitions of cause. He had to wait to give the definitions of cause until his argument had elucidated the nature of inference on which the relation of causation depends. One is called the philosophical definition and the other is called the natural definition. The relation and difference between them are much discussed among commentators (e.g., Robinson, 1985: Richards, 1985; Gotterbarn, 1985; Baier, 1991: 90-3; Craig, 2002; Winkler, 1991). It is possible further to clarify the moral implication of Hume's theory of causation by considering them. Let us first survey Hume's definition as follows.

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[91] Some commentators see Hume as inconsistent (e.g., Craig, 2002: 221; Stroud, 1977: 80-81; Stringfleet, 2002: 119-20).

> There may two definitions be given of this relation, which are only different, by their presenting a different view of the same object, and making us consider it either as a *philosophical* or as a *natural* relation; either as a comparison of two ideas, or as an association betwixt them. We may define a CAUSE to be 'An object precedent and contiguous to another, and where all the objects resembling the former are plac'd in like relations of precedence and contiguity to those objects, that resemble the latter.' If this definition be esteem'd defective, because drawn from objects foreign to the cause, we may substitute this other definition in its place, *viz.* 'A CAUSE is an object precedent and contiguous to another, and so united with it, that the idea of the one determines the mind to form the idea of the other, and the impression of the one to form a more lively idea of the other'. (T 1.3.14.31; SBN 170)

Hume considers this as "an exact definition of the relation of cause and effect" (T 1.3.14.30; SBN 169). It is most important that the two definitions represent one concept of causation, as Hume asserts that the two definitions are "a different view of the same object". A sign that Hume takes the two definitions as representing the same concept is that in the *Enquiries*, he blends the two as follows.

> But when one particular species of event has always, in all instances, been conjoined with another, we make no longer any scruple of foretelling one upon the appearance of the other ... We then call the one object, *Cause*; and other, *Effect*. (EHU 7.27; SBN 74-75)

The natural definition clarifies that causation is not a relation external to the working of human mind. The philosophical definition, on the other hand, describes causation as external perception, disregarding the involvement of the perceiver. It is to be noted, however, both definitions are conceived within the framework of the theory of perceptions. If two objects are not perceived, then the precedence and contiguity cannot even be recognised. They are vocabularies peculiar to perceptions. Thus, in the philosophical definition, two objects must be "recognised" as

regularity.[92] Moreover, it is significant that the relation between unknown causes and perceivable effects cannot be recognised as causation, because this introduces a dualism of appearance and reality. In other words, Hume's cause is *not* something that causes perception of the constant conjunction of two objects. Hume's project is to criticise this dualism in order to establish morality as a thoroughly human matter.

J. A. Robinson claims that the two definitions differ extensionally.[93] He claims that there are some cases where a causal event that meets the first definition does not meet the second definition (cf. Craig, 2002: 224). According to Robinson's interpretation, the regularity of two events, A and B, causes the mind to form the tendency to associate the object like A with the object like B. He says that this tendency is "a purely contingent feature (Robinson, 1985: 365)" because it is possible that relation defined by the philosophical definition does not possess this feature. Robinson says, "it is clearly an error on Hume's part to have offered it as a definition, and admittedly an extremely misleading error, leading to misinterpretations and confusions as to what he was trying to say about causation" (Robinson, 1985: 366). However, this interpretation is disputable.[94]

The problem is that Robinson assumes that the capacity which recognises the regularity of events A and B is different from the mind that forms the sense of necessity. This is unacceptable because it will not explain why the regularity between A and B is recognised as an instance of causation in the philosophical definition.[95] It is certain that there exist more cases of causation than we have already recognised, and they are simply not yet recognised as causation. This is a tricky point. Hume's

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[92] This is the difference from the Newtonian concept of cause as the underlying force (cf. Clatterbaugh, 1999: Ch. 7). Marina Frasca-Spada maintains that the Newtonian philosophy "teaches how to talk about such subjects as moving and resting bodies, while the 'science of human nature' talks about the ways people are – about human ideas, errors, beliefs, delusions, passions" (Frasca-Spada, 1998; 189).

[93] Don Garrett summarises the famous interpretative difficulty as follows. "unobserved regulatiries seem to prevent the set of causes defined by C1 [philosophical definition] from being even a subset of those defined by C2 [natural definition], while observed but unrepresentative samples seem to prevent the set of causes defined by C2 from being even a subset of those defined by C1" (Garrett, 1997: 98-9). Garrett fails to notice that Hume conceives the definition strictly as a theory of perceptions. There can be no unobserved "regularities", and an unrepresentative sample cannot cause psychological necessity. I will make this clear below.

[94] Edward Craig provides us with a solution to this problem (Craig, 2002: 225).

[95] This poses the same problem about the essential role of moral sentiments in moral perception.

definition is of the concept of cause, and not a concrete standard to apply to judge concrete cases of causal relationship. It is completely compatible with Hume's theory that there are many causal relations that are not yet recognized as such. Hume's point is that there is no way of recognising causation other than the two definitions. To identify the concrete case is a merely technical problem.

It is illegitimate to suppose that there is something more than we perceive in the concept of causation. If we find this hard to accept, Hume would say, it is only because we firmly believe in the objectivity of causation, which is not a conclusion of reason nor senses but imagination. Not only the vulgar people but philosophers cannot be exempted from entertaining this belief. Yet of the whole variety of phenomena that occur in the universe, only a small portion of them are counted as causation. The difference between causation and other perceptions consists exclusively in the sense of necessity that the two like events will constantly follow. By being recognised as a causal relation, the relation acquires a human significance. It matters not at all if the recognition is corrigible, the point is that the understanding is incorporated into a moral world and influences human behavior. It should be thoroughly confirmed that Hume asserts this human significance of the concept of causation.

On the other hand, Edward Craig asserts that the "two definitions" passage

> is best understood as presenting two descriptions of the circumstances under which belief in a causal connexion arise, one concentrating on the outward situation, the other on the state of the believer's mind that those outward facts induce. (Craig, 2002: 227)

Craig means that the phenomena of causes are independent of the formation of the beliefs. However, it is not clear how Craig can distinguish the circumstances of the formation of belief in a causal connection from the definition of causation. Presumably, it has to do with his causal realist understanding of Hume.[96] However, Hume himself calls the two descriptions the definition of causation. He does not specifically mean the "circumstance" of causal belief. The problem of Craig's

interpretation is that it leaves something in the concept of causation other than the recognition of two events constantly conjoined, and the psychological sense of necessity. There is nothing in causation other than the belief signified by the two definitions, because causation is a thoroughly human concept. Some might say causation is not composed of beliefs alone, there are other elements in causation other than beliefs, such as two physical objects, coalition, movement, break, explosion, *etc.*. These are in themselves nothing to do with the concept of causation. To consider the belief in causation differently from causation itself is to suppose the independent existence of causation, which leads to other problematic theories such as dualism or realism. Hume's motif is to dispel the notion that there is something behind the object. This idea leads to the creation of a new science, which we call social science. To allow existence beyond perception is, on Hume's view, simply "mysticism" (DNR 134). Hume intends to establish the science of man excluding those understandings.[97]

Thus, the positive implication of Hume's sceptical argument consists in demolishing the notion that there is something behind the perception, which is typically articulated as a dualism of phenomena and essence. Hume transforms this type of dualism into his theory of perception based on custom; what produces the causation does not exist in objects, but rather the accumulated experiences of the past forms the point of view of seeing a new perception in relation of another. He shows that the relationship between two objects cannot be determined by them alone. It is determined by the perspective of custom. Hume thus transforms the ontology of dualism into the epistemological synthesis of the particular and custom.

It is necessary to understand that the two definitions imply each other.[98] The constant conjunction described in the philosophical definition naturally produces the

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[96] Craig later modifies his realist position in his article "Projectivist *and* Realist?" (Craig, 2000).
[97] In the context of the Scottish Enlightenment, "realism" has a strong association with Catholicism, which is the major target of Hume's criticism.
[98] Annette Baier says, "the two views of cause are each non-eliminable alternatives. To understand either is to see that it brings the other "along with" it. We can get at cause from either view, since each leads us by causal inference to its attendant view. As both constant conjunction and the inference of the mind are essential to necessity, and necessity is essential to causation, so both of Hume's two views of cause must be grasped, and the double or mutual causal dependency

psychological necessity, and the philosophical causation is first confirmable as a causal relation when the natural definition is established. It is only by the natural definition that the philosophical definition is known to obtain, and even in the philosophical definition, there is a point of view presupposed that recognised the two objects constantly conjoined. Without the psychological sense of necessity, there is no causation for us.[99] Thus the priority lies in the natural definition.[100] As Hume says,

> Thus tho' causation be a *philosophical* relation, as implying contiguity, succession, and constant conjunction, yet 'tis only so far as it is a *natural* relation, and produces an union among our ideas, that we are able to reason upon it, or draw any inference from it. (T 1.3.6.16; SBN 94)

Although "cause and effect" is at once a natural and a philosophical relation, it is first discovered only through experience. That is why Hume downplays the working of reason in causal understanding. Human reason is the feeblest of all in this matter. This is the fundamental characteristic of Humean naturalism. Hume says,

> As to those *impressions*, which arise from the *senses*, their ultimate cause is, in my opinion, perfectly inexplicable by human reason, and 'twill always be impossible to decide with certainty, whether they arise immediately from the object, or are produc'd by the creative power of the mind, or are deriv'd from the author of our being. Nor is such a question any way material to our present purpose. We may draw inferences from the coherence of our perceptions, whether they be true or false; whether they represent nature justly, or be mere illusions of the senses. (T 1.3.5.2; SBN 84)

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between their foreign objects properly appreciated, before we see what precisely his definition says and shows" (Baier, 1991: 92).

[99] In a similar sense, if there is no moral sentiment, there is no belief in morality. There, Hume's central concern is how to show the necessity of moral sentiment. In this sense the priority between the two definitions becomes a central question.

[100] Kenneth Clatterbaugh mistakenly thinks that the two definitions are not coextensive, and takes the first definition as Hume's authentic definition (Glatterbaugh, 1999: 195-206). Hume names it philosophical, presumably because it deals only with the relation of perceptions.

Here is obviously an influence of the Lockean distinction between the real essence and the nominal essence. Hume expels the discussion of the real essence from his theory of perceptions. We have only to deal with our perceptions of the world as they appear to us in causal inferences, because their non-perceptive reality, whatever that may be, does not influence our belief or our behaviour. [101] Hume regards the sense of necessity as the essence of causation because causation functions as a belief only when it appears necessary to us. The sense of necessity is first produced when individual experiences acquire regularity, which is the hallmark of custom (cf. Loeb, 1995a: 101-32, 1995b: 301-27, 2001: 145-64). Custom consists in seeing each particular as an instance of a generality. Seeing the particular as an instance of generality implies the formation of a general point of view on the side of perceiver because no change is brought into the objects themselves.

There is another significant ground that Hume's theory of causation depends on the general point of view. It is useful to think who, in the first definition, recognises the regularity of two similar objects, and in the second definition, whose mind is determined to form a more lively idea of the other by the one. It is clear that Hume's definition does not describe the psychology of any particular individuals. The standard to distinguish true causation from false is whether it is represents the perception from the general point of view. In this sense, the general point of view indicates the normativity of causation. This can be understood as part of Hume's innovation of the Berkeleyan identification of existence with perceptions. Hume considers that the understanding of objects is created with the formation of generality. Causation composes a central element of the understanding of the world. Thus, Hume's constructivism overcomes the problem of how the human mind recognises the objective law that exists outside of mind.

There seem to be many cases when our beliefs are betrayed by reality, which is typically the case where the events that meet the natural definition do not meet some cases of philosophical definition. More generally, experience shows that in many cases our belief is wrong. But, this does not mean that Hume's theory is

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[101] I agree with Ken Levy who asserts that "Hume is not concerned with whether or not there are causal connections *in the objects*" (Levy, 2000: 58).

defective. The important fact is that it is another belief that determines whether or not one belief is betrayed. Hume's definition does not maintain that causation so defined is precise, and not because it is inadequate, but because a precise "uniformity in every particular, is found in no part of nature" (EHU 8.10; SBN 85).[102] Human nature is so arranged that we abide only by beliefs in all of our behaviours. If an event which has hitherto been considered as a cause fails to produce the expected effect, we revise our belief, and search for a new belief. This is the creation of the general point of view. We cannot possibly go beyond our belief concerning the existence and nature of causation. This means that there is no point in talking about the unknown law in reference to the concept of necessity. Hume says,

> I am, indeed, ready to allow, that there may be several qualities both in material and immaterial objects, with which we are utterly unacquainted; and if we please to call these *power* or *efficacy*, 'twill be of little consequence to the world. But when, instead of meaning these unknown qualities, we make the terms of power and efficacy signify something, of which we have a clear idea, and which is incompatible with those objects, to which we apply it, obscurity and error begin then to take place, and we are led astray by a false philosophy. This is the case, when we transfer the determination of the thought to external objects, and suppose any real intelligible connexion betwixt them; that being a quality, which can only belong to the mind that considers them. (T 1.3.14.27; SBN 168)

"True philosophy" has to show that causation and thus beliefs are specifically human matters, whose function lies in creating the human world. The task of true philosophy is to explore the human significance of this tendency. False philosophy surreptitiously borrows the concept of necessity from custom, and publicly declares it as the feature of external objects. Hume's two definitions of cause show that the concept of causation cannot be a matter other than of human perceptions. In this way, Hume completes the Copernican turn of what is considered external events into human construction.

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[102] It is a preconception since Aristotle that physical cause is more exact than moral cause. Hume is clear that the comparison is groundless.

5. Debate regarding Hume's Causal Realism

A new tendency of mind that is created through repeated experiences creates the recognition of the world which, in turn, becomes the framework of our behaviour. And the world as perceived is the realm of human nature, as it does not exist prior to or independent of human experiences. Hume's theory of causation is an attempt to identify a principle that constitutes the human world, including especially what are generally considered external events. However, Hume is aware of the fact that this idea may sound unacceptable to many people.

> But tho' this be the only reasonable account we can give of necessity, the contrary notion is so riveted in the mind from the principles above-mention'd, that I doubt not but my sentiments will be treated by many as extravagant and ridiculous. What! The efficacy of causes lie in the determination of the mind! As if causes did not operate entirely independent of the mind, and wou'd not continue their operation, even tho' there was no mind existent to contemplate them, or reason concerning them. Thought may well depend on causes for its operation, but not causes on thought. This is to reverse the order of nature, and make that secondary, which is really primary. (T 1.3.14.26; SBN 167)

Here, Hume reveals his Copernican project of rendering internal to human nature what are usually understood as external events. However, as though to endorse Hume's worry, there have emerges commentators who claim Hume to be a realist. Those commentators, named "New Humeans" assert that Hume is in fact a realist regarding causal power (Read and Richman eds., 2000). They maintain that Hume believes that we can know that causal powers and objects exist in the world, although we are unable to know any more about them than that they exist. I disagree with the realist reading of Hume, fundamentally because, firstly, I take Hume as a constructivist. Realism about causation does not make sense unless there are independent objects between which causation obtains. But Hume does not

presuppose the existence of independent objects.[103] Secondly, I understand Hume's theory of causation as the foundation of morality, but the realist interpretation does not serve as such a foundation (see Chapters 7 and 8).

John Wright, a representative new Humean, understands Hume as a sceptical realist concerning causation. On the other hand, Kenneth Winkler opposes Wright's interpretation and asserts that Hume denies the causal power that lies behind the observation of regular sequence of two objects (cf. Bell, 1997). In a counter response to Winkler, Wright criticises Winkler's view as follows.

> Hume defines power as 'the unknown circumstances of an object, by which the degree of quantity of its effect is fixed and determined'. In other words, it is the unknown circumstance in the cause which necessarily connects it with the effect. It is true that Hume stresses that this circumstance can only be identified through the effect; that is, as that which is constantly conjoined with it. We have no independent identification of it. Thus we have 'additional evidence', as Hume claims in his first 1759 note, to show that we are totally ignorant of any power, such as the *vis inertiae*. But if, as Winkler thinks, the power were *nothing more* than regular succession, 'these explications and definitions' would afford no such evidence. Hume's aim is to show that the power is unknown to us. (Wright, 2000: 92)

Wright's quotation of Hume's definition of power is rather arbitrary.[104] Hume denies the independent existence of "power" even though he talks about what is usually regarded as such.[105] Wright's "the power is unknown" is a meaningless

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[103] New Humeans assert the reality of causation, while they are indecisive about the existence of external bodies. But this is clearly odd. It is hard to understand why they think external law is more certain in terms of reality than the external body (see Chapter 4).

[104] Hume says, "we have no idea of a being endow'd with any power, much less of one endow'd with infinite power. But if we will change expressions, we can only define power by connexion; and then in saying, that the idea, of an infinitely powerful being is connected with that of every effect, which he wills, we really do no -more than assert, that a being, whose volition is connected with every effect, is connected with every effect: which is an identical proposition, and gives us no insight into the nature of this power or connexion" (T 1.4.5.31; SBN 248).

[105] Hume says, "I am, indeed, ready to allow, that there may be several qualities both in material and immaterial objects, with which we are utterly unacquainted; and if we please to call these *power* or *efficacy*, 'twill be of little consequence to the world. But when, instead of meaning these unknown qualities, we make the terms of power and efficacy signify something, of which we have a clear idea, and which is incompatible with those objects, to which we apply it, obscurity

phrase for Hume, because there is no known power, either. New Humeans hold that though the human mind cannot conceive the "force" that makes one event cause or necessitate another, it is possible to suppose there to be something, of which we have no distinct idea, which is responsible for the regularities in question (Read, 2000: Introduction; Strainstreet, 2002: 133). Thus, Wright asserts that as Hume says power is unknown, power must exist as something other than what we observe as the psychological necessity. This is Wright's sceptical realist Hume (cf. Strainstreet, 2002: 128-132). Winkler, on the other hand, criticises the realist interpretation by pointing out that it is illegitimate to infer that "there are unknown powers in bodies" from Hume's remark that "it is possible that there are unknown qualities in bodies" (Winkler, 1991: 550). As Winkler's criticism implies, one of Hume's kernel assertions is that it is impossible to know that the unknown qualities are what we understand as "power".[106] This is different from Wright's understanding that Hume's point is to show that the power is unknown to us. Wright makes an illicit leap when he asserts that "the unknown circumstances" are "in the cause", because it is impossible to decide where the unknown circumstance exists.

Hume's task is to clarify what we usually understand by power in terms of the theory of perceptions. As in cases of other important concepts he deals with in the *Treatise*, He intends to humanise the concept of power. Thus, as Hume defines power as a thoroughly human matter, he cannot mean that there is unknown "real" power. Hume purports to modify our common understanding that assumes power is inherent in objects.[107] Thus, Hume dashes the understanding that there is an independent power that works between two events. This implies that the relationship

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and error begin then to take place, and we are led astray by a false philosophy" (T 1.3.14.27; SBN 168).

[106] Kenneth Winkler makes another important point that "the hidden powers of observable things rest not on unobservable (and unanalyzable) real powers, but on unobservable mechanisms or structures" (Winkler, 1991: 549).

[107] Another realist-interpretation commentator, Galen Strawson dismisses the *Treatise* in favour of the *Enquiry* to defend his position (Strawson, 2003: 8). He confuses Hume's explanation of what is ordinary taken to be causation as Hume's genuine definition. In fact, the definition Wright takes as Hume's own is explained in a footnote (EHU 7. footnote 17; SBN 77) as an understanding of ordinary people ("we"), or "all philosophers" whose theories Hume intends to criticise (cf. Craig, 2000: 117).

between two objects is not determined exclusively between themselves.[108] Every object is causally related to all kinds of things, so there is no law that corresponds exclusively to a particular relation.

It is important to understand that the perception of resemblance is involved in the concept of cause. Without resemblance, there is no concept of causation. No two exactly the same events happen twice in the universe, and if all events happen only once, it does not make sense to call the relation causal law. Law implies universality; there is no law that can apply only in one instance. Therefore, in fact, there is no causal law in the universe, because everything in the universe is particular. This understanding is supported by Hume's nominalism. Hume holds that though there are no abstract ideas discoverable by reason or senses, imagination regards particular ideas as a representation of other resembling particulars by custom. Similarly, though there is no law that causes two events, custom takes one particular causal relation as an instance of causal law in other resembling events, because law is abstraction.[109]

It might be possible to understand that what Hume calls the unknown circumstance should be understood as the whole universe, or the whole existence, because even the tiniest event we observe requires the whole universe to happen. Just as there is no unnecessary moment in our life, and as every drop of water serves a role to constitute a great ocean, everything has a role in making every other event to happen.[110] This theory should apply to society to help us understand that everyone is necessary for the whole society. What do we learn from the fact that the real "cause" is the whole universe? It is empty to call the whole universe the causal power, because it only means that every event has the same cause. The search of the cause does not end here. It is necessary to enquire into the cause of the whole universe and the whole existence. This inference typically has a termination; to suppose the God

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[108] This is the same as in the case of morality, appropriate moral relationship between two persons is not determined only between the two persons. In later chapters, I argue that Hume elucidates the political power based on his theory of causation.

[109] Simon Blackburn notices the connection between Hume's arguments of "*general* idea" and causation (Blackburn, 1990: 245).

[110] This represents the situation that every citizen contributes to compose the society by paying tax and even by just living.

as the real cause.[111] This is the doctrine of occasionalism. Occasionalism has rightly revealed that any proceeding object cannot be the exclusive cause of the following object. However, occasionalism cannot solve the core question because it does not clarify the human meaning of the causation (cf. Clatterbaugh, 1990: 246). And the result is the denegation of scientific understanding, which Hume purports to establish.

Craig asserts that Hume's intention is to show there is something-we-know-not-what in order to destroy any pretension to finding what we might antecedently have hoped to understand about nature. However, even if this is right, this argument is headed in a wrong direction. Hume tries to establish the realm of human belief from which we can establish a reliable system of belief. In this sense, Hume's project signifies the foundation of social sciences, not simply sceptical limits (cf. Blackburn, 1990: 246).

Hume understands this as a necessary consequence from a false assumption that "every thing must have a cause" to exist (T 1.3.4.7; SBN 81). This is a useful and necessary framework for understanding the human world and human events. However, if we apply this to other fields beyond the process of acquiring human beliefs, it can only invite an absurd conclusion. This is the purport of Hume's project of applying the experimental method; if we expand our understanding of causal relations beyond perceivable impressions, it becomes impossible to decide what is legitimately or illegitimately understood as cause. Hence emerges the demon who might deceive Descartes or the God who is the real cause of occasionalism in Malebranche; anything goes, once the *Deus ex machina* is permitted. Hume's proposal of the science of man is stop relying on it.

It is important to remember that Hume declares it impossible to consider the cause of sensations (T 1.1.2.1, SBN 8). With this assertion, we return to the starting supposition of Hume's epistemology. Hume clearly recognises that this question is outside of his queries. This is a positive assertion of confining the realm of his science of man. As is well known, Kant supposes the unknown real cause thing-in-itself (*Ding an sich*) which lies behind our perceptions, but unlike Kant, Hume

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[111] Incidentally, Buddist philosophy asserts that the ultimate cause of existence is the "emptiness".

refuses to incorporate such a concept into his explanation of the recognition of the world.[112] Because, what he tries to explain is the very fact how human beings naturally come to obtain their manner of understanding the world. Therefore, if someone tries to admit the unknown causal power in Hume, he breaks the basic framework of Hume's epistemology, and introduces a different element into his science of man. The assumption of the unknown cause makes Hume a quasi-dualist.

It is true, as Craig points out, Hume sometimes seems to make sincere remarks as though he supports the causal reality (Craig, 2000: 117). Now let us consider why Hume positively talks of the causal power as if it exists in objects, despite his sceptical argument. In short, it is because his theory is about the human significance of the belief in causation.[113] Belief in causation works not because causes are real, but because we believe it is so. Owing to the human fact that we believe causation is real, our belief in causation serves to compose the human world. Fictions function as genuine only when we believe them as genuine and behave relying on them. This is the secret of creating the human world which does not exist originally in nature. By believing the causation, human beings obtain a pattern of behaviour that follows their beliefs.[114] In the theory of causation, Hume sets the standard to tell when and how factious belief is useful and reliable, and how to distinguish false or merely fictions belief from genuine or reliable belief; a reliable fictitious belief is one that is involved in causal inference. Because of the sense of necessity we are forced to believe that our beliefs represent the reality as such, rather than that we feel causation necessary because it is objective. Causation seems to be reliable precisely because of the sense of necessity. He takes note of causation because of its relevance to human behaviour. In this sense, Hume's theory of

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[112] As we will see in Chapter 4, the notion that an object has an inherent principle is an imaginative projection from the fact that we cannot perceive the same object simultaneously from the front and from behind. Thus the notion of power or substance is derived not from rational argumentation but from a natural act of the imagination based on our experience of the world.

[113] I agree with Winkler who maintains that Hume is a causal realist in a non-philosophical sense (Winkler, 1991: 544-8).

[114] This is the same reason why human beings believe in the existence of external body (see Chapter 4). As we will see, Hume argues justice and government as fiction in a similar manner. As we will see, behind this lies a Hobbesian idea that the power of authority becomes genuine when people actually fear it seriously. Hume's theory of causation is based on the similar line of thought.

causation and thus reality is strategically oriented toward moral theory. There is essentially no distinction in Hume between moral and non-moral perception, because both are equally a matter of human nature.

As Hume recognises, there is a difficulty in understanding his theory, because it requires anatomising beliefs that people, including philosophers, have already accepted as objective. This difficulty accompanies all the important conceptual analysis in Hume. It seems that the realist interpretation is trapped in this difficulty.

6. Concluding Remarks

Hume's close cousin, Henry Home, later Lord Kames is reported to have been "crucified" by reading the chapter on "Power" in Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding*.[115] It is now clear that the most significant implication of Hume's theory of causation is to replace the understanding that objects have inherent qualities or power, or the notion that there is something in or behind the object. Hume needs to explain the quality of an object in terms of two events, i.e. as a theory of causation because the independent quality is a fiction, and the quality of an object enters into human perception only in relation to other objects. Realism means a position to suppose something inherent in the object, but the Humean constructivism clarifies that the something is the epistemological history of the perceptions.

Don Garret asserts that Hume's two definitions of cause are "extremely general and open ended" (Garret, 1997: 115).[116] If this kind of understanding is still common among Hume readers, it is a regrettable indicatory that Hume's aim is not understood on the most crucial point. Hume's definitions are exhaustive in exploring the human significance of the human concept of causation. There is nothing in the human mind about causation other than the perception of two similar events constantly following, and the mind's natural tendency to be induced by one event to

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[115] It was recorded in a correspondence of 1723. Hume's friendship with Henry Home, fifteen years his senior, is believed to have started early in his life. Mossner suggests that Henry Home was one of Hume's mentors in philosophy in his college days (Mossner, 1980: 58).

[116] Don Garret is not the only commentator to take this view. Clatterbaugh likewise insists that "Hume's definitions cast too wide a net" (Clatterbaugh, 1999: 205).

infer the other. If there is any other feature, Hume would be very curious to know what it is. However, it is possible to say that owning to the generality and the open-endedness of Hume's concept, all events can count as causation and thus be incorporated into our understanding of the world.[117] The perception of causation is like the perception of moral sentiment. The sentiment that identifies causation is nothing but the particular sentiment of necessity. In this respect, perceptions of causation and morality are the same. The fundamental purport of Hume's theory of causation is not to explore the essence of nature as an external object, but to establish the theory of morality as a case of special causation. By conceptualising causation as a human matter, he found the natural basis on which to base the moral order. There is no wonder that Hume's theories of causation and moral judgment are similar.

John Passmore described Hume's ethical theory as the "ethics of belief" (Passmore, 1980: appendix). As I have argued, Hume takes special note of belief as the guide for human behaviour. To acquire appropriate beliefs is the fundamental task of human beings in order to balance reality and ideas. Human beings obtain belief typically through the experiences of causation. Belief serves as a guide in coping with the natural environment. Beliefs are the understanding of qualities of objects; by having beliefs human beings incorporate external objects into the condition of their behaviour. Human beings obtain beliefs through causal observation. As Hume emphasises by his sceptical argument, there is no necessity apart from human reactions. As far as our observation of natural events is concerned, no event can occur in accordance with a strict law. Causation is a human concept which is applicable to the relation between human perceptions only. By his theory of causation, Hume criticises the essentialist idea of power. He reveals that the concept of power is a fiction, signifying only the psychological requirements of human beings. The significant point to note is that the theory of belief provides the model for his theory of moral sentiments. Both are founded on the manner in which they are conceived. As I have argued, they are founded on the general point of view. Belief in the causal connection between two objects presupposes the belief in their

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[117] Similar characteristic is applicable to the allocation of property, and the selection of political authority (see Chapters 7 and 8).

independent existence. As we will see in the next chapter, the belief in causation will develop in the *Treatise* into the belief in the external bodies.

Chapter Four:

Moral Implications of the Existence of the External Object

Introduction

The existence of the external object ranks alongside causation and personal identity as one of the three major topics of Hume's theoretical philosophy. Hume's deep commitment to the topic is shown by the fact that he returns to it in several places in the *Treatise*. The main discussion, though, is placed in two sections, one at T 1.2.6., entitled "Of the idea of existence and of external existence"; the more substantial discussion, however, is at T 1.4.2., entitled "Of skepticism with regard to the senses". There can be little wonder, then, that the topic is usually discussed in relation to Hume's skepticism; however, Hume's theory of the existence of the external objects is not restricted to a mere skeptical argument. As I will seek to show, the topic not only occupies a central place in his epistemology, but plays just as central a role in Hume's whole system of moral philosophy. This chapter explores the moral significance of Hume's theory of the existence of the external object. Above all, this chapter attempts to present a new reading of Hume's theory of the external object as a theory of the perception of human beings.[118]

Hume first discusses the problem of demonstrating the existence of the external objects in the context of the development of his own system. It is, therefore, important to place the argument in the context of the whole development of the *Treatise*. Hume strategically develops his theory starting from the most primitive perceptions and then shows how they are associated with each other. Independent impressions and ideas are the most basic units which, through the three natural

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[118] Before Hume, others such as Epicurus, Descartes, Hobbes, Spinoza, and Locke discussed the human body as an external object, the Latin *corpus* signifying both object and human body. In particular, Spinoza explicitly argues that the human body is an external object from a moral perspective.

relations and the seven philosophical relations, come to form general ideas. In his explanation of general ideas, Hume introduces another of his crucial concepts, custom (see Chapter 2). The notions of the general idea and custom are then used to explain another central concept: causation (see Chapter 3).

Before dealing with the problem of external objects, then, Hume has clarified the concepts of impressions and ideas, general ideas, beliefs, and causation. These are all essential for our understanding of our natural circumstances. The external object is the next concept that appears in the development of Hume's theory of human nature. We would be extremely confused if we had only to rely on our present perceptions, and were not sure of the whole situation beyond them. The belief in causation arises simultaneously with the supposition of the existence of the external object which contains independent objects that have causal powers. Without any belief in objects, the discussion of causation is not really complete in itself.

A fundamental characteristic of Hume's theory is a holism whereby everything is related to everything else; each discussion prepares the next stage, while the meaning of the preceding discussion is shaped by what follows. The final stage of the theory crystallises all the previous discussions such that they all stand or fall together. In the *Treatise*, the final stage is the theory of civil society with government. Before discussing the moral construction of civil society, it is necessary to explain the physical world which is the stage on which human interactions take place. If the final stage of the argument is concerned with morality, all the preceding stages should be concerned with this as well.

In section 1, I clarify Hume's concept of existence in comparison with Berkeleyan idealism. I argue that Hume's task is to explain the origins of the concept of externality. In section 2, I discuss how Hume attempts to compensate for the limits of reason by appealing to the workings of nature in producing our beliefs regarding the notion of externality. In section 3, I explain how Hume's denial of the distinction between primary and secondary qualities aims to undermine the claim that objectivity arises out of the workings of reason. I argue that Hume's idea of existence can be used to refute the Lockean distinction between primary and secondary qualities. In section 4, I argue that Hume's theory of continued existence is a theory of reliable belief. Hume's theory of the creation of the belief in external existence is

explained in relation to the general point of view that recognises various perceptions as composing one object. In section 5, I explain how imagination induces the notion of distinct existence from the notion of continued existence. In section 6, I argue that belief in external existence depends on the general point of view, and that it is this that provides us with the concept of objectivity. The moral implication of the idea of objectivity is then clarified to present a strong case against Lockean liberalism, which I claim is based on an implausible account of objectivity. Further, because the general point of view is the principle which produces the most solid belief in objectivity, it can be regarded as a reliable basis for moral evaluation. Most of all, I argue that Hume's theory of external objects implies the perception of human beings which is solid not by virtue of their physical quality, but by virtue of morality. In this way, I argue that Hume's moral theory is grounded in his epistemology.

1. Hume's Concept of "Existence"

It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the notion of existence. Ontology is a central theme in the philosophical tradition up to the medievals, and Hume's direct philosophical rivals all treat of this concept in some way or another. Descartes' dualism consists in recognising two types of existence, Locke's empirical philosophy appeals to an unknown substratum to support primary and secondary qualities, and Berkeley's central tenet is "*esse* is *percipi*". It is little to be wondered that Hume too has a unique theory about this concept. He begins his discussion of existence with his trademark question, asking whether or not we have an impression corresponding to existence.

> There is no impression nor idea of any kind, of which we have any consciousness or memory, that is not conceiv'd as existent; and 'tis evident, that from this consciousness the most perfect idea and assurance of *being* is deriv'd. From hence we may form a dilemma, the most clear and conclusive that can be imagin'd, *viz.* that since we never remember any idea of impression without attributing existence to it, the idea of existence must either be deriv'd from a distinct impressions, conjoin'd with every perception or object of our thought, or must be the very same with the idea of the perception or object (T 1.2.6.2; SBN 66).

Hume is confident in his answer that "So far from there being any distinct impression, attending every impression and every idea, that I do not think there are any two distinct impressions, which are inseparably conjoin'd" (T 1.2.6.3; SBN 66). There is no impression that exclusively corresponds to "existence", because there are no two objects that are exactly the same except with respect to their existence. Hume asserts that, "every object, that is presented, must necessarily be existent" (T 1.2.6.6; SBN 67).[119]

This appears to be a Humean rephrasing of the Berkeleyan thesis that to be is to be perceived. At first sight, Hume too appears to identify perceptions with existence. But there is a crucial difference between Berkeley and Hume. For Berkeley, the slogan "*esse* is *percipi*" is intended as an ontological claim: the existence of something follows from its being perceived. Berkeley's idealism stems from this claim. Hume, however, is making not an ontological but an epistemic claim: our perception of existence is no different from other perceptions. Hume provides an explanation of the perception of existence; perceived things should be taken as existing. There is no other means for us to reach existence other than via perceptions. Hume says,

> Let us fix our attention out of ourselves as much as possible: Let us chase our imagination to the heavens, or to the utmost limits of the universe; we never really advance a step beyond ourselves, nor can conceive any kind of existence, but those perceptions, which have appear'd in that narrow compass. This is the universe of imagination, nor have we any idea but what is there produc'd. (T 1.2.6.8; SBN 67-68)

This paragraph immediately reminds us of Locke's remark that,

[119] The same idea appears again in his discussion in "Of the immateriality of the soul" (T 1.4.5.10; SBN 235-6).

> All those sublime Thoughts, which tower above the Clouds, and reach as high as Heaven it self, take their Rise and Footing here: In all that great Extent wherein the mind wanders, in those remote Speculations, it may seem to be elevated with, it stirs not one jot beyond those *Ideas*, which *Sense* or *Reflection*, have offered for its Contemplation. (*Essay* 2:1:24)

One crucial difference, however, is that Locke holds that ideas "are the impressions that are made on our Senses by outward Objects, that are extrinsical to the Mind" (*ibid.*), while Hume holds that impressions of sensations arise "in the soul originally, from unknown causes" (T 1.1.2.1; SBN 7). Berkeley's idealism asserts that all that exists are ideas which are modifications of mind. Hume does not subscribe to idealism, however, because it presupposes the existence of mind as distinguished from perceptions. For Hume, the existence of the mind is another problem to be explained in terms of existence.

Locke, having criticized the Cartesian innateness of ideas, is left with the task of explaining the origin of our ideas. According to Locke, "existence is a simple idea suggested to the understanding, by every object without, and every idea within" (*Essay*, 2; 7; 7). At the same time, Locke asserts the existence of a corporeal substance or substratum which carries primary and secondary qualities. Berkeley criticises Locke's solution on the grounds that this idea requires something that produces the ideas, but which is distinct from them (see Chapter 2). Berkeley takes it to be impossible to maintain a distinction between the supporting substance and the qualities, because this amounts to claiming the existence of material substance.

Berkeley thinks he has overcome materialism, but, to put it bluntly, having claimed to have expelled "materials", he then calls the same things "ideas". Hume approves of Berkeley's demolition of the distinction between primary and secondary qualities, but is not satisfied with Berkeley's solution because it does not explain our common distinction between existence and non-existence. Hume attempts to overcome this difficulty by identifying existence with perceptions. He transfers the problem from "what is out there" to "how perceptions create what is out there". For Hume, perception is a fundamental given. Hume's is not a causal theory, nor is it a representative theory which supposes the objects of perception to exist independently

of perceptions. At the same time, Hume intends to answer the Berkeleyan challenge: neither sense nor reason can establish that there are external bodies, and they cannot even be posited as a hypothesis to account for our perceiving the ideas that we do. What matters for us in our moral life is not the ontological constitution of existence, but the perception of existing things. Hume tries to explain what it is that we believe to exist.[120] While for Berkeley "*esse* is *percipi*" is virtually the final word, for Hume the story begins right there.

Usually, ordinary people - the Humean "vulgar" - think that things exist outside of our minds. Perception is naturally taken to be about something external. However, from the Humean perspective, perceptions lie in our mind. There is no perceivable connection between perceptions and external things as the alleged causes of the perception. Hume begins from a philosophical premise and proceeds to show how the final construction is produced, the latter being something which is already at our hand. Hume's task is to explain, from the given facts, the real nature of our concept of existence; how it is that we come to entertain the concept of existence as we do, though we in fact have only perceptions. First Hume needs to indicate the nature of the problem itself. He says,

> The farthest we can go towards a conception of external objects, when suppos'd *specifically* different from our perceptions, is to form a relative idea of them, without pretending to comprehend the related objects. Generally speaking we do not suppose them specifically different; but only attribute to them different relations, connexions and durations. (T 1.2.6.9; SBN 68)

First of all, it is important to affirm that, contrary to our common understanding, "externality" does not mean spatial distance, but denotes a class of objects qualitatively different in kind from perceptions (cf. Bennett, 2001b: 285). It is absurd to interpret spatial distance as externality, because spatial distance does not

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[120] We will see that in the "universe of imagination", the interaction of existent things presents a spectacular development that culminates in the creation of civil government and human life backed by virtue, and Hume's *Treatise* is the story of that drama. We require external bodies as the characters and as the background scenery of this story.

make sense unless there is a fixed point from which to measure distance. But it is impossible to decide the point at which the perception is located, just as it is impossible to fix the point where the self is located.[121] More specifically, by external existence as a non-perceived object, Hume means something that exists according to its own principle.

The above remark shows that his goal is not to argue for or against the existence of the external objects, but to explain how our idea of the existence of the external objects is composed out of impressions and ideas. This means that there is nothing that produces the understanding of existence other than perceptions. Here, Hume apparently has Locke's theory as his target. The Lockean causal theory of perception is wrong, on Hume's view, because it allows empirically unconstrained existence, and because it is based on an indefensible account of the nature of perceiver and object. Hume sees that Locke presupposes what should be explained. Hume attempts to provide an explanation of our common understanding of existence which is firmly based on perceptions.

2. Scepticism and Nature

Hume's theory of the external object is mainly developed in the section titled "Of scepticism with regard to the senses". This section is preceded by its twin argument titled "Of scepticism with regard to reason". It is important to understand the second argument on the basis of the first. In "Of scepticism with regard to reason", Hume examines the system of philosophy that relies on reason. Clearly, he aims to criticise Cartesian philosophy, among others, according to which reason is the foundation of all certain knowledge. Hume does not deny the certainty of "the rules" of reason, and therefore he is not a methodological sceptic who doubts everything. Hume is concerned with our application of the rules to real situations in which real human activities are directed towards dealing with truth. It would be true that no rule can play its role in our life without our applying it to reality. Hume claims that in the accumulation of an unlimited number of trials, there emerges a possibility of error.

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[121] This is easily seen when we reduce our picture of the world to the atomic level. There is no

He argues that all human knowledge is empirical, and is subject to probability. Hume argues that in any reasoning there is a possibility of error, and therefore "all knowledge is denigrated into probability", which leads to "continual diminution, and at last a total extinction of belief and evidence" (T 1.4.1.6; SBN 183). He takes the example of mathematics and maintains, "there scarce is any proposition concerning numbers, of which we can have a fuller security." According to Hume, mathematics is also a matter of probability in so far as any human commitment is involved.[122] This is a challenge to the Cartesian principle of "clear and distinct" perception as a foundation for knowledge.

Once we are trapped in scepticism, the conflict between the "sceptical and dogmatical reasons" (T 1.4.1.12; SBN 187) continues until "both vanish away into nothing" (*ibid.*). This argument reveals Hume's true intention in this topic, which lies in answering the question "how it happens" "that these arguments above-explain'd produce not a total suspense of judgement, and after what manner the mind ever retains a degree of assurance in any subject?" (T 1.4.1.9; SBN 184). Hume ascribes the secret to nature. According to Hume,

> Nature, by an absolute and uncontroulable necessity has determin'd us to judge as well as to breathe and feel; nor can we any more forbear viewing certain objects in a stronger and fuller light, upon account of their customary connexion with a present impression, than we can hinder ourselves from thinking as long as we are awake, or seeing the surrounding bodies, when we turn our eyes towards them in broad sunshine (T 1.4.1.7; SBN 183).

It is remarkable that at the height of his sceptical argument Hume turns to the workings of nature. Nature "breaks the force of all sceptical arguments in time, and keeps them from having any considerable influence on the understanding" (T 1.4.1.12; SBN 187). This idea parallels Hume's account of causation where he ascribes what is usually taken to be the working of reason to the "sensitive" (T 1.4.1.8; SBN 183) part of our nature. In fact, all of his arguments in the *Treatise* aim

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line that demarcates between the "inside" and the "outside" of our body.

[122] Later we will see that the notion of number is our empirical construction.

to explore how the principle of nature solves the otherwise insoluble problems of reason in human matters. This basic conviction is persistent also in his dealings with the existence of the external object. Although reason cannot defend the principle concerning the existence of body, the sceptic is not allowed to doubt it, because

> Nature has not left this to his choice, and has doubtless esteem'd it an affair of too great importance to be trusted to our uncertain reasonings and speculations. We may well ask, *What causes induce us to believe in the existence of body?* but 'tis in vain to ask, *Whether there be body or not?* This is a point, which we must take for granted in all our reasonings (T 1.4.2.1; SBN 187).

It is interesting to understand this against the background of his theory as discussed in the last section. In T 1.2.6., Hume rejects the Berkeleyan identification of ideas with being, because simply identifying materials with ideas does not explain the fact that there seems to be an external object around us that is distinct from ideas. When he first affirms the existence of the objects of perceptions, Hume does not mean that perceptions exist independently. Claiming the existence of objects commonly entails claiming that the object is distinct from the perception itself. Accordingly, Hume goes on to explore how it is possible that objects of perception exist "externally". He asks how it is that we come to believe that there is an object that is different from perception. Hume says, "our present enquiry is concerning the *causes* which induce us to believe in the existence of body" (T 1.4.2.2; SBN 187-88).

Now Hume has a premise and a conclusion: we only have impressions and ideas, and we in fact believe in the existence of body. Hume's task is to bridge the gap. Here, the gap lies between the foundation of his epistemology, perceptions, and our compelling natural belief in body. Hume explores the full scope of this thesis with regard to human nature. The key difficulty is that the external object seems to possess some qualities that are different from our perception.

In order to explore the nature of the external object, Hume distinguishes two sub-beliefs that we have regarding external objects, namely that they have a *distinct* existence from us, and that they have a *continued* existence, and asks:

> why we attribute a CONTINU'D existence to objects, even when they are not present to the senses; and why we suppose them to have an existence DISTINCT from the mind and perception? Under this last head I comprehend their situation as well as relations, their external position as well as the independence of their existence and operation. These two questions concerning the continu'd and distinct existence of body are intimately connected together. For if the objects of our senses continue to exist, even when they are not perceiv'd, their existence is of course independent of and distinct from the perception; and *vice versa*, if their existence be independent of the perception and distinct from it, they must continue to exist, even tho' they be not perceiv'd. (T 1.4.2.2; SBN 188)

In other words, the belief in the existence of the external object is elucidated as continued and independent existence. Hume strategically retains this distinction, and tries to show that continued existence is entailed by distinct existence.[123] It is crucial to understand the implication of this distinction; the merely continued existence signifies the inert object, and independent existence signifies the lively object.

He questions which faculty of the human mind produces this belief in the continued existence of objects: the senses, reason, or the imagination. To take the conclusion first, Hume shows that the belief is not the product of senses, nor of reason, but of imagination. First, the senses cannot produce the belief in the continued existence of their objects, because they deal with perceptions only in so far as they appear to the senses. In fact, sense cannot even underpin the belief in distinct existence, for it is evident that "our senses offer not their impressions as the images of something *distinct*, or *independent*, and *external*, because they convey to us nothing but a single perception" (T 1.4.2.4; SBN 189). In order to have an impression of an independent object, we have to sense every aspect of the object at once; the independency of our perceptions from ourselves can never be an object of perception. Therefore, Hume asserts that "[a] single perception can never produce the idea of a double existence, but by some inference either of the reason or imagination"

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[123] We will see the reason Hume makes this dichotomy of externality below. To take the conclusion first, the independent existence applies to material, and independent existence applies particularly to living organs.

(*ibid.*). Moreover, Hume claims that if the senses were to produce the belief in the independent existence of objects, they must show at the same time the "relation and situation" (*ibid.*) between the objects and our impressions. It is significant that Hume questions not the perception of external things, but turns his fundamental scepticism to the relation of externality itself. Therefore, what is established as an external object in the end is not the perceptions of external things, but more fundamentally the relation of the externality of our perceptions.

Specifying the exact meaning of "externality" poses a problem: Hume asks with respect to what an object must be positioned in order to be external. "External" does not mean spatially distant from our "body", because our body is also an external existence.[124] Hume's argues for an existence exterior to perceptions as a criticism of Berkeley. What is perceived as external existence is the same object of perceptions that exists in the absence of the perception. This does not mean that something that is different from perception exists, however: Hume's theory is not the kind of realism that allows for the independent existence of the cause of perceptions. The emergence of externality in fact means there must be established a point of view that regards an object as external. It is crucial to understand what this point of view is.

3. Hume's Challenge to the Primary and Secondary Distinction

Following the examination of the senses, reason is examined as the cause of the belief in external existence. The argument is developed in the section "Of the modern

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[124] In fact this is a tricky point that often eludes exact reasoning. For example, Immanuel Kant says, "Idealism consists in the claim that there are none other than thinking beings; the other things, to which in fact no object outside the later corresponds. I say on the contrary: things are given to us as objects of our senses situated outside us, but of what they may be in themselves we know nothing; we only know their appearances, i.e. the representations that they effect in us when they affect our senses. Consequently I do indeed admit that there are bodies outside us, i.e. things which, although wholly unknown to us as to what they may be in themselves, we know through the representations which their influence on our sensibility provides for us, and to which we give the name of bodies. This word therefore merely means the appearance of that for us unknown but none the less real object. Can this be called idealism? It is the very opposite of it. (Kant, *Prolegomena*, Academy edition, vol. 4: 288)" The point is to determine what exactly the "unknown" is external to. Kant seems to assert externality to "us". Then where are *we*? Kant skips this point. But Hume's general point of view refers precisely to the perspective of "us".

philosophy" in which Locke is a central figure.[125] Behind this discussion lies the distinction between primary and secondary qualities. Let us consider Hume's argument regarding this distinction. Hume observes that there are three different kinds of impressions.

> The first are those of the figure, bulk, motion and solidity of bodies. The second those of colours, tastes, smells, sounds, heat and cold. The third are the pains and pleasures, that arise from the application of objects to our bodies, as by the cutting of our flesh with steel, and such like. Both philosophers and the vulgar suppose the first of these to have a distinct continu'd existence. The vulgar only regard the second as on the same footing. Both philosophers and the vulgar, again, esteem the third to be merely perceptions; and consequently interrupted and dependent beings. (T 1.4.2.12; SBN 192)

As is well known, the Lockean distinction between primary and secondary qualities corresponds to the distinction between the first and the second plus the third group. Locke defines "quality" as power to produce in the perceiver an idea of the object. According to Locke, the primary qualities are those that allow of rational treatment in physics.[126] They are alleged to resemble the object. Solidity, extension, figure, motion, rest, bulk, texture, *etc.* are examples of primary qualities. They are "inseparable", "unchanging", "constantly found", and "found in any part" of the object. On the other hand, secondary qualities are not in the objects themselves, but are powers to produce various sensations in us by their primary qualities. Colours, sounds, tastes, smells are examples. The crucial point in relation to the present discussion is that Locke ascribes to reason the discovery of the distinction. As is often claimed, Locke's distinction is not entirely robust, although it is still possible to understand what he intends by it (cf. Alexander, 1977: 70).[127] In his criticism of Locke, Berkeley denies the distinction between primary and secondary qualities. As

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[125] It is clear that Locke is the main figure in Hume's "modern philosophy" because he is referred to most: whether Hume is true to Locke's theory is a different question. Other than Locke, Hume apparently has in mind Descartes, Boyle and Malebranche in this connection.

[126] Locke apparently inherits this idea from Boyle (cf. Palmer, 1976: 181-9).

[127] Locke himself seems to notice the limitations of this distinction (*Essay* 4.6.11). For a defending interpretation, see e. g., Bennett, 2001b, Ch. 25.

we have already seen, his reasoning derives from his basic thesis that *esse* is *percipi*. Hume develops Berkeley's argument and rejects the perceivability of the specifically primary qualities without the secondary qualities.

Hume first recognises that the modern philosophy is exempt from the defect of the ancient philosophy that centred on the "fictions of substance and accident" (T 1.4.4.2; SBN 226), or "substantial forms and occult qualities" (*ibid.*) that "are like the spectres in the dark" (*ibid.*). They are defective because they "are neither universal nor unavoidable in human nature" (*ibid.*). Hume maintains that "the fundamental principle of that philosophy is the opinion concerning colours, sounds, tastes, smells, heat and cold; which is asserted to be nothing but impressions of mind" (T 1.4.4.3; SBN 226). However, the modern philosophy "asserts to be nothing but the impressions in the mind, derived from the operation of external objects, and without any resemblance to the qualities of the objects" (*ibid.*). A problem arises from this. Hume says,

> 'Tis certain, that when different impressions of the same sense arise from any object, every one of these impressions has not a resembling quality existent in the object. For as the same object cannot, at the same time, be endow'd with different qualities of the same sense, and as the same quality cannot resemble impressions entirely different; it evidently follows, that many of our impressions have no external model or archetype. Now from like effects we presume like causes. Many of the impressions of colour, sound, etc. are confest to be nothing but internal existences, and to arise from causes, which no way resemble them. These impressions are in appearance nothing different from the other impressions of colour, sound, *etc.* We conclude, therefore, that they are, all of them, deriv'd from a like origin. (T 1.4.4.4; SBN 227)

Once this principle is admitted, it is followed by an "easy consequence" (T 1.4.4.5; SBN 227) that all those sensible qualities should be removed from the rank of continued independent existence, and

> we are reduc'd merely to what are call'd primary qualities, as the only *real* ones, of which we have any adequate notion. These primary

> qualities are extension and solidity, with their different mixtures and modifications; figure, motion, gravity, and cohesion. The generation, encrease, decay, and corruption of animals and vegetables, are nothing but changes of figure and motion; as also the operations of all the bodies on each other; of fire, of light, water, air, earth, and of all the elements and powers of nature. One figure and motion produces another figure and motion; nor does there remain in the material universe any other principle, either active or passive, of which we can form the most distant idea. (T 1.4.4.5; SBN 227)

The point is that primary qualities are essential for the scientific understanding of the world that is based, above all, on mathematics. In order to understand the core implication of this argument, it is necessary to consider Hume's concern about its possible implication for moral philosophy. Prior to Hume, Berkeley had recognized the danger this theory posed for his religious belief; if the primary qualities are possible without the secondary qualities, the role of perceivers, and thus ultimately the rule of God as the ultimate perceiver, may become redundant regarding the primary qualities.[128] Hume, not sharing Berkeley's religious views, perceives a different kind of dangerous consequence from this theory. Hume's concern lies with the crucial role played by reason in the argument, and with the lack of any role for human nature, which Hume sees as destructive of an account of morality based on moral sentiments. If there is objectivity apart from perception, the workings of perceptions and ultimately the workings of human nature become similarly redundant as to the primary qualities. This is the crucial reason for which Hume has to attack the primary and secondary distinction, and the independence of the primary qualities from the secondary ones. Hume's task is, as in the discussion of causation, to clarify the human commitment in the perception of the physical world ---a commitment that modern science tends to take for granted--- in order to show that even the perception of the natural world belongs to human nature. The scientific understanding of the physical world typically expels human commitment. Hume opposes this mechanical picture of the physical world. He examines the putative

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[128] His very strong personal reactions are amply shown in his *A Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (Berkeley, 1998: sects. 57, 66, 93, 102, 107).

reason why secondary qualities are alleged not real, and are thus discarded to obtain rational knowledge.

> Upon examination, I find only one of the reasons commonly produc'd for this opinion [that is, the subjectivity of the secondary qualities] to be satisfactory, *viz.* that deriv'd from the variations of those impressions, even while the external objects, to all appearance, continues the same. These variations depend upon several circumstances. Upon the different situations of our health: A man in a malady feels a disagreeable taste in meats, which before pleas'd him the most. Upon the different complexions and constitutions of men: That seems bitter to one, which is sweet to another. Upon the difference of their external situation and position: Colours reflected from the clouds change according to the distance of the clouds, and according to the angle they make with the eye and luminous body. Fire also communicates the sensation of pleasure at one distance, and that of pain at another. Instances of this kind are very numerous and frequent. (T 1.4.4.3; SBN 226)

This paragraph reminds us of the argument in which Hume introduces the concept of the general point of view (T 3.3.1.15; SBN 581-2). The similarity of this discussion to his discussion of moral perception is too obvious to be ignored. The focus of the present discussion is whether or not we can trust these direct sensations. Hume's basic assertion is that personal perceptions should be adjusted rather than discarded. It is safe to say that this problem is fundamental to Hume's perspective on the reliability of perceptions. It is connected with the problem of objectivity: how to attain a common standard among personal perceptions. Hume discusses whether the idea of primary qualities is sustainable, and lodges a decisive objection to the distinction.

> I assert, that instead of explaining the operations of external objects by its [i.e. the modern philosophy] means, we utterly annihilate all these objects, and reduce ourselves to the opinions of the most extravagant skepticism concerning them. If colours, sounds, tastes, and smells be merely perceptions, nothing we can conceive is possest of a real, continu'd, and independent existence; not even motion, extension and solidity, which are the primary qualities chiefly insisted on (T 1.4.4.6; SBN 227-28).

Hume's argument here is paradigmatic. He begins with motion. Motion cannot be conceived of without presupposing a "body moving" (T 1.4.4.7; SBN 228), and a moving body "resolves itself into the idea of extension or of solidity" (ibid.). Consequently, the reality of motion depends upon that of extension or solidity. Then, Hume examines the notion of extension. Extension must be conceived as either coloured or solid. But colour is by definition no real quality. Therefore, extension must be linked with solidity. However, according to Hume,

> The idea of solidity is that of two objects, which being impell'd by the utmost force, cannot penetrate each other; but still maintain a separate and distinct existence. Solidity, therefore, is perfectly incomprehensible alone, and without the conception of some bodies, which are solid, and maintain this separate and distinct existence. Now what idea have we of these bodies? The idea of colours, sound, and other secondary qualities are excluded. The idea of motion depends on that of extension, and the idea of extension on that of solidity. 'Tis impossible, therefore, that the idea of solidity can depend on either of them. For that wou'd be to run in a circle, and make one idea depend on another, while at the same time the latter depends on the former. (T 1.4.4.9; SBN 228-29)

Hume concludes that "after the exclusion of colours, sounds, heat, and cold from the rank of external existences, there remains nothing, which can afford us a just and consistent idea of body" (T 1.4.4.10; SBN 229).[129] The fundamental idea here is that body requires a relationship with other similar objects to be perceived as such. This is a denial of the idea of a substance that can exist by itself, without relating with other bodies.

Now, let us return to the starting classification of impressions. Through the rejection of the primary-secondary distinction, Hume distanced himself from the opinion of philosophers who refused to take "colours, sounds, heat and cold", in so far as they appear to the senses, to be as real as motion and solidity. On the other

hand, Hume modifies the mistake of the vulgar who think that pleasure and pain are different from "colours, sounds, heat, and cold". Hume maintains that all of those are of the same kind as perceptions. He also makes no distinction between our mental activities: "Every impression, external, and internal, passion, affection, sensations, pains and pleasures, are originally on the same footing" (T 1.4.2.7; SBN 190). This is clear evidence that Hume asserts the uniformity of perceptions. This discussion has a serious implication for his moral theory because moral sentiments are "a particular kind of pleasure or pain". Therefore, through the denial of the distinction between primary and secondary qualities, Hume demonstrates that the perceptions of pleasure and pain are no more subjective than other perceptions.

It is clear that the belief in the external objects is not based on reason either. Hume says that "'tis obvious … that children, peasants, and the greatest part of mankind are induc'd to attribute objects to some impressions, and deny them to others" (T 1.4.2.14; SBN 193), and not by the arguments of philosophers. As we have seen above, reason is a source of scepticism. It tends to deny the continuing existence of body, without ever achieving its goal in our life. Therefore, only one candidate is left. Hume concludes that "that opinion must be entirely owing to the imagination" (*ibid.*). And this conclusion introduces the next task of exploring how, then, the imagination produces the idea of the existence of the external object.

4. Constance, Coherence, and Identity

Since not all impressions generate the notion of their distinct and continued existence, it is necessary to explain which kinds of impressions do cooperate with the imagination to produce this notion. Clearly, it is not those characterised by "involuntariness", "superior force", and "violence" (T 1.4.2.16; SBN 194). For, says Hume, "'tis evident our pains and pleasures, our passions and affections, which we never suppose to have any existence beyond our perception, operate with greater violence, and are equally involuntary, as the impressions of figure and extension,

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[129] Owing to the "big bang theory", it is our common knowledge that the universe had no extension in its very beginning. From this point of view, Descartes definition of body as extension and Locke's definition of "primary qualities" (*Essay*, 2.8.9) is invalid.

colour and sound, which we supposed to be permanent beings" (T 1.4.2.16; SBN 194). Another hypothesis is therefore required. It is noticeable that this is a basic idea in Hume's theory of belief. Merely involuntary, strong, and violent beliefs are not in themselves a reliable guide for understanding the world and our behaviour.[130] This, I shall argue, opens up the possibility that Hume's search for the "manner" in which some perceptions constitute our belief in the external object also clarifies the notion of a valid belief in morals.

Hume observes that "all those objects, to which we attribute a continu'd existence, have a peculiar constancy" (T 1.4.2.18; SBN 194). By "constancy", Hume means appearance "in the same order", or presence "in the same uniform manner". It is to be remembered that causation depends on a similar notion of "constant conjunction". Most significantly, continued existence is founded on the relation of resemblance. But there is a problem in thinking of constancy as the essential characteristic of things possessing continued existence, because constancy "is not so perfect as not to admit of very considerable exceptions. Bodies often change their position and qualities, and after a little absence or interruption may become hardly knowable" (T 1.4.2.19; SBN 195). Hume observes that coherence within the changes has a better chance of being the defining characteristic of external objects.

The coherence of appearance cannot be obtained from reasoning concerning causes and effects, for there is no causal regularity in the impression of the external object, "since the tuning about of our head, or the shutting of our eyes is able to break it" (T 1.4.2.21; SBN 198). Coherence of appearance appeals primarily to the understanding, and only indirectly to custom, because custom cannot be obtained from what was never present to mind. "There is scarce a moment in my life", Hume confesses, where "I have not occasion to suppose the continu'd existence of objects" (T 1.4.2.20; SBN 197). Therefore, it is doubtful that it is the product of an inference of the understanding. The supposition of the external object should be a more natural product than the result of inference. We certainly suppose the continued existence of objects, which is not the direct and natural effect of constant repetition and connection, but "must arise from the co-operation of some other principle" (T

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[130] This is why Hume criticizes enthusiasm and fanatics (see Chapter 3).

1.4.2.21; SBN 198). Coherence needs the hypothesis of the continuing existence of objects, but coherence is "too weak to support alone so vast an edifice, as is that of the continu'd existence of all external bodies" (T 1.4.2.23; SBN 198-99). Hume thinks "we must join the constancy of their appearance to the coherence, in order to give a satisfactory account of that opinion." However, constancy of our perceptions "gives rise to the opinion of the *continu'd* existence of body, which is prior to that of its *distinct* existence, and produces that latter principle" (T 1.4.2.23; SBN 199). Hume provides us with "a short sketch" of his theory as follows.

> When we have been accustom'd to observe a constancy in certain impressions, and have found, that the perception of the sun or ocean, for instance, returns upon us after an absence or annihilation with like parts and in a like order, as at its first appearance, we are not apt to regard these interrupted perceptions as different, (which they really are) but on the contrary consider them as individually the same, upon account of their *resemblance*. But as this interruption of their existence is contrary to their perfect *identity*, and makes us regard the first impression as annihilated, and the second as newly created, we find ourselves somewhat at a loss, and are involv'd in a kind of *contradiction. In order to free ourselves from this difficulty*, we *disguise*, as much as possible, the interruption, or rather remove it entirely, by supposing that these interrupted perceptions are connected by a real existence, of which we are insensible. This supposition, or idea of continu'd existence, acquires a force and vivacity from the memory of these broken impressions, and from that propensity, which they give us, to suppose them the same; and according to the precedent reasoning, the very essence of belief consists in the force and vivacity of the conception. (T 1.4.2.24; SBN 199, italics mine)

The significant point is that we, by the natural tendency of imagination, tend to regard interrupted, but resembling, perceptions as connected in order to save us the trouble of treating them as different. Custom is indifferent to the truth-value of reason. We may be uncertain about the essence of each perception, but it is impossible to keep questioning all of them, all of the time. The most notable point is that the underlying principle of the belief in the external object is fundamentally the same as that of treating a particular impression as belonging to a wider class of perceptions. It is also closely related to the principle of taking the general point of

view in moral judgement, which consists in avoiding contradiction and arriving at a stable judgement (T 3.3.1.15; SBN 581-2). Hume tries to justify this system by showing the following four things. First, "to explain the *principium individuation,* or the principle of identity" (T 1.4.2.25; SBN 199-200), second, to "give a reason, why the resemblance of our broken and interrupted perceptions induces us to attribute an identity to them"; third, to "account for that propensity, which this illusion gives, to unite these broken appearances by a continu'd existence"; and fourth, to "explain that force and vivacity of conception, which arises from the propensity".

Let us consider Hume's four discussions one by one. First, the principle of identity is one of the seven philosophical relations (cf. T 1.1.5.4; SBN 14), and is employed in Hume's previous discussion on causation.[131] Hume gives an exact definition here. According to Hume, no one perception is sufficient to convey the idea of identity, for one "single object conveys the idea of unity, not that of identity" (T 1.4.2.26; SBN 200). "On the other hand, a multiplicity of objects can never convey this idea, however resembling they may be suppos'd" (T 1.4.2.27; SBN 200). They are regarded as different objects. And since "both number and unity are incompatible with the relation of identity, it must lie in something that is neither of them" (T 1.4.2.28; SBN 200). Here lies the key to the concept of identity. It is important to understand that the notion of equality is based on the notion of identity. Equality means two different items are identical in a particular respect.[132]

In elucidating the concept of identity, Hume tries to "remove this difficulty" by having "recourse to the idea of time or duration" (T 1.4.2.29; SBN 200). In a strict sense, time implies succession, for there cannot be time where there is no change. So, when we apply the idea of time to any unchangeable object, "'tis only by a fiction of the imagination, by which the unchangeable object is supposed to participate in the changes of the co-existent objects, and in particular of that of our perception (*ibid.*; SBN 200-201)". That is, when we think we observe for any time an unchangeable object, the fact is that we create it by a fiction of imagination. "This fiction of the imagination almost universally takes place; and 'tis by means of it, that a single

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[131] The principle of identity is also important in the discussion of the nature of personal identity.
[132] The concept of equality bears immense political implications (see Chapter 7).

object, plac'd before us, and survey'd for any time without our discovering in it any interruption or variation, is able to give us a notion of identity" (*ibid.*).

The unchangeable object is a fiction of imagination created by a pure concept of time.[133] By our tendency to understand time as conceptually independent from the notion of change, we create a fiction of the possibility of unchangeable objects with changing qualities. This fiction gives rise to the notion of identity. The notion of identity is the key to making "number" and "unity" compatible; "when we consider any two points of this time, we may place them in different lights: We may either survey them at the very same instant" (T 1.4.2.29; SBN 201). Then, they must be multiple in order to be conceived of at once and as existent in these two different points of time. We can obtain the idea of unity when we trace the succession of time by a like succession of ideas, and conceive first of one moment, along with the object then existent, and imagine afterwards a change in time without any variation or interruption in the object; in this manner we arrive at the idea of unity. Identity is thus a "medium betwixt unity and number; or either of them, according to the view in which we take it" (*ibid.*). We cannot say "that an object is the same with itself, unless we mean, that the object existent at one time is the same with itself existent at another" (*ibid.*). "Thus the principle of individuation is nothing but the *invariableness* and *uninterruptedness* of any object, thro' a suppos'd variation of time" (T 1.4.2.30; SBN 201).

Next, Hume tries to establish "why the constancy of our perceptions makes us ascribe to them a perfect numerical identity, tho' there be very long intervals betwixt their appearance, and they have only one of the essential qualities of identity, *viz.* invariableness" (T 1.4.2.31; SBN 202-3). The previous argument established the mechanism through which our successive perceptions create the identity of objects. Hume now needs to explain how it is that interrupted perceptions can create the notion of numerical identity. In dealing with this, Hume has in mind "the opinion and belief of the vulgar" who "can never assent to the opinion of a double existence and representation" (*ibid.*). Hume reminds us, regarding the relation of resemblance, that:

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[133] Typically, for Kant time is one of the forms of intuition.

> Nothing is more apt to make us mistake one idea for another, than any relation betwixt them, which associates them together in the imagination, and makes it pass with facility from one to the other. Of all relations, that of resemblance is in this respect the most efficacious; and that because it not only causes an association of ideas, but also of dispositions, and makes us conceive the one idea by an act or operation of the mind, similar to that by which we conceive the other (T 1.4.2.32; SBN 202-3).

Here resemblance is declared to be the central principle. In order for there to be a relation of resemblance, there needs to be more than two perceptions on more than two occasions. According to Hume, if some objects are capable of placing the mind in the same disposition, they are very naturally confounded with identical ones; we regard the action as continuous, as an effect of viewing one single object, and we attribute sameness to every succession of related objects. "The thought slides along the succession with equal facility, as if it consider'd only one object; and therefore confounds the succession with the identity" (T 1.4.2.34; SBN 204). "An easy transition or passage of the imagination, along the idea of these different and interrupted perceptions, is almost the same disposition of mind with that in which we consider one constant and uninterrupted perception" (T 1.4.2.35; SBN 204). This is why we "mistake" the one for the other. Clearly, this idea can be regarded as a development of Hume's notion of the general idea in which resembling ideas are classified as falling within a single group.

In this way, Hume has explained the notion of identity and the reason why the resemblance of our broken and interrupted perceptions induces us to attribute numerical identity to them. However, the identity between two resembling objects still does not mean that they have a continued existence. Therefore, his third task is to explain that propensity, which the illusion of the identity between different perceptions produces, to unite these broken appearances in a continued existence. Now, the idea of identity between separate perceptions inevitably produces a contradiction. It is inevitable because "the interruption of the appearance seems to be the contrary to the identity, and naturally leads us to regard these resembling perceptions as different from each other" (T 1.4.2.36; SBN 205). Hume's solution is

that "the perplexity arising from this contradiction produces a propension to unite these broken appearances by the fiction of a continu'd existence" (*ibid.*). Here, the principle of nature that seeks stability emerges. According to Hume, "Nothing is more certain from experience, than that any contradiction either to the sentiments or passions gives a sensible uneasiness" (T 1.4.2.37; SBN 205), while "whatever strikes in with the natural propensities, and either externally forwards their satisfaction, or internally concurs with their movements, is sure to give a sensible pleasure" (T 1.4.2.37; SBN 205-6). Now, the notion of the identity of resembling perceptions and the interruption of their appearance stand in tension with each other. Then the mind feels uneasiness, from which it will naturally seek relief … this desire for relief being the expression of the natural search for stability. It is apparent that this is also applicable to our taking of the general point of view, which is a means to avoid contradiction. Stability of the object of perception requires the postulation of its continued existence, and stability is desired because of the uneasiness associated with apparent contradiction.[134] This is not a conclusion of logic, but a principle of nature.

Interruptions of appearances and perceptions are so long and frequent, that it is impossible to overlook them; nevertheless, we do not cease to believe in the continued existence of the objects that so appear to us. How can this be possible? Hume appeals to the "bundle theory" of personal identity to provide a reason; as mind is nothing but a "bundle" of perceptions, absence of any particular perception involves no contradiction. Hume says, "[a]n interrupted appearance to the senses implies not necessarily an interruption in the existence. The supposition of the continu'd existence of sensible objects or perceptions involves no contradiction" (T 1.4.2.40; SBN 207-8). This means that as the mind is composed of a perpetually changing group of perceptions, a change in perceptions, even an interruption of them, appears natural to it.

In a nutshell: "When the exact resemblance of our perceptions makes us ascribe to them an identity, we may remove the seeming interruption by *feigning* a

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[134] There are strong political implications in this choice of vocabulary. The notion of uneasiness or stability is carried through to his moral theory.

continu'd being, which may fill those intervals, and preserve a perfect and entire identity to our perception" (T 1.4.2.40; SBN 208, italic mine). Feigning the continued existence of the objects of perception is, therefore, the means whereby the mind attains stability. It is a fiction but does no harm to the mind because it "involves no contradiction" (*ibid.*). Once the fiction of the independent object is established, it is supposed to possess different qualities, and thus it is easy to believe that it exerts different causal effects.

However, it is not enough just to feign continued existence. We must also in fact believe the fiction to be real. So Hume proceeds to answer the fourth question; "*from whence arises such a belief*" (T 1.4.2.41; SBN 208), that we "not only *feign* but *believe* this continu'd existence" (*ibid.*). The difference between an idea and belief lies in its vivacity. "The relation causes a smooth passage from the impression to the idea, and even gives a propensity to that passage" (*ibid.*). Hume explains:

> Our memory presents us with a vast number of instances of perceptions perfectly resembling each other, that return at different distances of time, and after considerable interruptions. This resemblance gives a propension to consider these interrupted perceptions as the same; and also a propension to connect them by a continu'd existence, in order to justify this identity, and avoid the contradiction, in which the interrupted appearance of these perceptions seems necessarily to involve us. Here then we have a propensity to feign the continu'd existence of all sensible objects; and as this propensity arises from some lively impressions of the memory, it bestows a vivacity on that fiction; or in other words, makes us believe the continu'd existence of body. (T 1.4.2.42; SBN 208-9)

As in the theory of causation, and also in the theory of sympathy, the perception of resemblance confers vivacity to the idea. The idea of continued existence obtains vivacity through the memory of accumulated experiences. The general point of view is involved here in recognising the resemblance, and it becomes clear that the belief in continued existence is a means to "avoid the contradiction", just as in morals. Hume also explains why we believe in the continued existence of new objects.

> If sometimes we ascribe a continu'd existence to objects, which are perfectly new to us, and of whose constancy and coherence we have no experience, 'tis because the manner, in which they present themselves to our senses, resembles that of constant and coherent objects; and this resemblance is a source of reasoning and analogy, and leads us to attribute the same qualities to the similar objects. (T 1.4.2.42; SBN 209)

It is because of neither the content, nor the violence, but the "manner, in which they present themselves to our senses" that we ascribe a continued existence to objects. It is impossible to overemphasise the importance of "manner", not "content", as the standard that distinguishes reliable belief from mere fiction in Hume. It is the manner in which we treat new perceptions or objects as representing the same thing. The general point of view represents this manner in moral belief. Thus, as in the case of the classification of ideas, in which a new idea is classified as the same as already experienced resembling ideas, new objects are believed to have continued existence in so far as they resemble other objects that are supposed to have continued existence. Human beings base their behaviour on this convenient fiction, one which is not a conclusion of reason but a product of imagination. We come to believe this fiction and behave as if it is real. In this way, human beings live in a world of fiction which is their own product.

5. The Connection between Continued and Distinct Existence

Thus far, Hume has established how we come to produce and believe the fiction of the continued existence of objects. He goes on to explain the mechanism that transfers our belief in continued existence over to the distinct or independent existence of objects. This argument proves to be crucial in that it reveals that Hume's real target is the theory of double existence of perception and object. Hume first reminds us of the fact that our perceptions do not have any independent existence. This is easily seen when "we press one eye with a finger," and see that all the objects have a different quality.

> [W]e clearly perceive, that all our perceptions are dependent on our organs, and the disposition of our nerves and animal spirits. This opinion is confirm'd by seeming encrease and diminution of objects, according to their distance; by the apparent alterations in their figure; by the changes in their colour and other qualities from our sickness and distempers; and by an infinite number of other experiments of the same kind; from all which we learn, that our sensible perceptions are not possest of any distinct or independent existence. (T 1.4.2.45; SBN 211)

According to Hume, "the natural consequence of this reasoning shou'd be, that our perceptions have no more a continu'd than an independent existence" (T 1.4.2.46; SBN 211). It is noticeable again that these examples show a strong similarity with Hume's account of the general point of view. The belief in distinct existence, however, contains more difficulties than that of mere continued existence. Theoretically, the claim that perceived objects have independent existence is false in so far as the existence is based on perceptions. This is so clear, according to Hume, that philosophers simply cannot ignore it.

Therefore, "philosophers have so far run into this opinion, that they change their system, and distinguish betwixt perceptions and objects, of which the former are suppos'd to be interrupted, and perishing, and different at every different return; the latter to be uninterrupted, and to preserve a continu'd existence and identity" (*ibid.*). This is the background of the theory of the double existence of perceptions and objects. Hume maintains that this theory cannot be arrived at "but by passing thro' the common hypothesis of the identity and continuance of our interrupted perceptions" (*ibid.*). In other words, philosophers do not propose the theory of the double existence on the basis of any pure reasoning. "Were we not first perswaded, that our perceptions are our only objects, and continue to exist even when they do not appear to our senses, we shou'd never be led to think, that our perceptions and objects are different, and that our objects alone preserve a continu'd existence" (*ibid.*). Hume asserts that the theory of the double existence of perceptions and objects obtains its plausibility from the previous hypothesis of continued existence. In order to prove this, Hume shows that it is neither a conclusion of reason, nor of

imagination. It is not derived from reason, for we cannot infer the existence of one thing from the presence of the other by means of the relation of cause and effect.

> But as no beings are ever present to the mind but perceptions; it follows that we may observe a conjunction or a relation of cause and effect betwixt different perceptions, but can never observe it betwixt perceptions and object. 'Tis impossible, therefore, that from the existence or any of the qualities of the former, we can ever form any conclusion concerning the existence of the latter, or ever satisfy our reason in this particular. (T 1.4.2.47; SBN 212)

Hume then argues that imagination also does not produce the belief in the theory of double existence. It is not clear that the imagination "proceeds to the belief of another existence, resembling these perceptions in their nature, but yet continu'd, and uninterrupted, and identical" (T 1.4.2.48; SBN 213). Hume's strongest ground against this claim is that it is an improper subject for fancy to work upon. Hume relies upon common facts about our imagination to understand the common opinion concerning the continued and distinct existence of body. Vulgar people believe that our perceptions are of independent objects, which continue to exist even when they are not perceived.

Hume reveals the trick within this philosophical system. Vulgar people believe in the continued existence of external objects, and though their belief is plainly false, there is a natural cause that induces people, including philosophers, to accept it. Belief in continued existence leads naturally to belief in distinct or independent existence. The claim that objects possess distinct existence cannot be directly imagined nor deduced from reason, for it too is false. After a little reflection, the philosopher notices this. However, the belief in continued existence is so strong that the philosopher, not knowing the real cause of the belief, tries to reconcile the contradiction. Where there is a conflict between the product of philosophical reflection and natural opinion, the latter always prevails in the end. But philosophers cannot ignore reason, either. This is the quandary. Therefore, according to Hume,

> In order to set ourselves at ease in this particular, we contrive a new hypothesis, which seems to comprehend both these principles of reason and imagination. This hypothesis is the philosophical one of the double existence of perceptions and objects; which pleases our reason, in allowing, that our dependent perceptions are interrupted and different; and at the same time is agreeable to the imagination, in attributing a continu'd existence to something else, which we call *objects*. This philosophical system, therefore, is the monstrous offspring of two principles, which are contrary to each other, which are both at once embrac'd by the mind, and which are unable mutually to destroy each other. ... The contradiction betwixt these opinions we elude by a new fiction, which is conformable to the hypotheses both of reflection and fancy, by ascribing these contrary qualities to different existences; the *interruption* to perceptions, and the *continuance* to objects. (T 1.4.2.52; SBN 215)

Hume's criticism is comprehensively applicable to dualism theories. Hume asserts that the theory of double existence represents our ambiguous positioning between imagination and reason. If we were fully convinced by imagination of the continued existence of objects, the opinion of double existence would never occur to us. On the other hand, if we are fully convinced by reason, we would not even embrace the notion of continued existence. Therefore, the theory of double existence comes from "the intermediate situation of the mind" (T 1.4.2.52; SBN 216), such that we are not directly ruled either by nature or by reason. And this is why our belief can be both reasonable and creative. Both beliefs are false, strictly speaking, but between them, reason can do no better than imagination, and imagination will finally prevail. This is why Hume sarcastically calls it "another advantage that the philosophical system resembles the vulgar one." By virtue of this, the philosopher too can have a double existence: coming and going between his closet and his common life!

There is still other point to be noted with respect to this philosophical system. First, as we can conceive nothing but perceptions, "[w]e suppose external objects to resemble internal perceptions" (T 1.4.2.54; SBN 216). "*Secondly*, As we suppose our objects in general to resemble our perceptions, so we take it for granted, that every particular object resembles that perception, which it causes" (T 1.4.2.55; SBN 217). Because of this very fundamental assumption regarding resemblances, we have neither doubt nor uneasiness about recognising the external object. But the fact

is that we escape this doubt only because reason makes use of the product of imagination without acknowledging its debt to it.

Hume asserts that it is "a gross illusion" (T 1.4.2.56; SBN 217) to suppose that our resembling perceptions are numerically the same. It "is this illusion, which leads us into the opinion, that these perceptions are uninterrupted, and are still existent, even when they are not present to the senses" (*ibid*). For no good reason, the philosophical system has introduced a double confusion. Hume attacks this philosophical illusion, saying "What then can we look for from this confusion of groundless and extraordinary opinions but error and falshood?" (*ibid*). However, scepticism is not his final word. Hume acknowledges the irresistible power of nature and imagination, which can afford us remedy, and upon which we can entirely rely. This is fundamental to the creation of the human world.[135]

6. Moral Significance of the Belief in External Body

In this section, let us consider the underlying moral implications of Hume's theory of the external body.[136] In the first place, as in other major topics, Hume's argument concerning the existence of the external object is a theory of belief. To have a belief in the external object is to believe in the continued and distinct existence of objects. Hume maintains that this idea is a fiction, and this is a conclusion which tends towards scepticism. But this epistemic scepticism does not have any destructive power in moral matters. No matter what reason asserts, the common belief in the existence of the external object is ineradicable. In this way, Hume establishes the priority of the working of human nature over reason. Most of all, belief in the existence of the external object generates a stable view of the world. Beliefs in continued and distinct objects represent stability in its perfection, which means the most reliable beliefs. Reliable beliefs provide one with the circumstance in which to

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[135] It must be admitted that Hume's argument is complicated and seems sometimes not as coherent as my interpretation may suggest. But for my purpose it is sufficient if the present interpretation represents at least one plausible way of interpreting Hume.

[136] It is to be noted that unlike Descartes no entry for "external world" is found in the *Treatise*.

engage in one's more particular activities.[137] No regular activities are possible without the belief in the stability of external objects.

It is significant that the basic concept of "objectivity" derives from the nature of belief in external bodies. It is impossible to overemphasise the importance of this concept. Objectivity signifies our common picture of the world which is composed of independent objects. The concept also produces our common notion that each object has its own structure and qualities. Objectivity is constituted by the general ideas that represent existences, and on which is based our absolutely fundamental reliance on the world. By obtaining the notion of objectivity, the world of subjectivity also emerges, for objectivity and subjectivity mutually imply each other. "Subjectivity" can be defined as perceptions that do not form beliefs in independently existing object. Insofar as they are perceptions, they are no different from the "objective" perceptions: they only lack the manner of appearing needed to produce the fiction of independent existence.[138] Objectivity and subjectivity correspond to our understanding of the public and the private (Livingston, 1984: 14). Apart from the manner in which they appear, pleasure and pain are no different from colour or other perceptual qualities. Thus Hume prepares us for the concept of moral sentiment, as a particular pleasure or pain, as the standard of moral judgement. The principle that underlies, and partially constitutes, the idea of the external object is again proven to be the general point of view, which assures that things are perceived in the particular manner inherent to the objective.

The relation of resemblance has an equally significant role to play here as it does in the case of abstract ideas (see Chapter 2). Resemblance consists in the point of view of seeing one particular in association with the other particulars. Thus, belief in the external object consists in the point of view which treats different perceptions as signifying the same object, rather than in the concrete contents themselves, which it is in fact impossible to identify because what appears to us is always changing and

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[137] As we will see in Chapters 8, Hume's concern in the theory of promise is how to create the same kind of reliable belief in moral world.

[138] Hume's innovation is apparent when one thinks of the totally different usage of the "objective reality" in Descartes, which means the "representational content" of an idea. See the entry of "objective reality" (Cottingham, 1993: 136-7).

never remains the same. Only because of the general point of view, external things are perceived as stable, which is the whole mark of nature.[139] This stable belief, further, is what is usually signified as objectivity. In this way, Hume replaces the rational principle of objectivity with a natural principle.

Dualism or what Hume calls the double existence theory has been Hume's constant target. Behind the Lockean theory of the double existence lies a principle that concerns morality; it is to establish the authority of reason as a way of reaching truth. Hume, on the other hand, intends to clarify the intimate relationship between the notion of objectivity and human nature. The notion of objectivity is essential for us to have stable relationships with our circumstances, and it is inevitable because it is a product of the genetic process of human nature.[140]

Locke thought that for there to be objective moral truth, this truth must be discoverable through reason alone.[141] Hume proves this wrong by showing that the alleged objectivity is a fiction of imagination. Even if the notion of objectivity is a scientific hypothesis, the problem is how and from where we obtain the hypothesis in the first place. The consequences of Locke's theory are the neglect of convention, sentiments, and human nature. This is why Hume persistently criticises reason as a principle in moral matters. In this way, his epistemology can be regarded as preparing the ground for his moral theory.

Vulgar people arrive at a mistaken belief in objectivity by tracing a natural course from the notion of a continued object to the notion of a distinctly existing object. But the objectivity alleged by this "false philosophy" inevitably results in falsehood, because it has no other means but to smuggle its truth surreptitiously from sentiments whose credibility it officially despises.[142] The corollary of the

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[139] Hume obtained this conviction from the Stoics.
[140] This can be seen as a radical execution of the Locke's "Historical, plain Method" (*Essay* 1.1.2). Livingston calls Hume's empiricism "*historical*" (Livingston, 1984: 94).
[141] In this belief, Locke shows his debt to the Natural Law tradition.
[142] Recall Hume's excellent explanation of the conflict between reason and skeptical reason (T 1.4.1.12, SBN 186-87). Livingston discusses Hume's adherence to the distinction between the true philosophy and the false philosophy (Livingston, 1998: Ch. 2). Bennett interprets Hume's theory as a criticism of Lockean materialism (Bennett, 2003: 305-6).

impossibility of primary qualities without secondary ones is that reason is empty without perceptions.

Although continued existence and distinct existence imply each other, distinct existence has a deeper significance. Because external existences are distinct and independent, it is a natural inference to make us believe that their activity must be derived from themselves; they are considered to have their own principles which sustain and move them. This is the genesis of the idea of power, and eventually autonomy. As an extension of this idea, other people, as external bodies, are recognised as free agents capable of spontaneous activities. This is the naturalistic basis for ascribing to other people the right to freedom. In this sense, the physical perception of others occurs prior to moral recognition, and the idea of free agency is founded on the natural stability of the former. Hence, the notions of power and spontaneity are by-products of the imaginative creation of external object. We regard the object as the source of different qualities. By supposing this origin of variable perceptions, perceptions are first completed and become available for stable belief. In this sense, the creation of external object is the terminal of the process of physical perception. The most significant of all the external bodies are human beings. It is possible to understand the theory of human existence is the underlying objective of Hume's exposition. Thus Hume presents the theory that others are supposed to be independent, have their own qualities which comprise character, and their own principle of movement which is freedom. This means that when we recognise others, we should treat them as such in order to have stable relationship with them.

There is a moral reason to regard external objects and human beings on a par. The quality of the external object is treated as it is because it is believed to be distinct. Distinctiveness is the most appropriate concept for perceiving human beings because morality requires us to respect and treat human beings as having their own inherent qualities. To regard others as they are is the natural significance of the idea of recognition which leads to a clearer notion of morality, such as freedom or moral right. Hume's sceptical argument shows that nothing is solid and impenetrable by its own power. What confers solidity and impenetrability is our imagination that perceives the object. Human beings are solid and impenetrable only by virtue of moral perceptions that consist in the general point of view.

It is also clear that the real intention behind Hume's criticism of the primary and secondary distinction is to critique Locke's reason-based moral theory and its corollary, the social contract theory. Lockean liberalism is based on the idea of independent individuals equipped with the power to rule themselves. Hume's theory of the external object as a creation of imagination shows that independent existence is in fact a creation of custom and imagination. Locke presupposes freedom and regards persons as moral beings, while Hume's morality lies in the perception of other beings, and treating them accordingly, and for Hume freedom is the very thing to be explained in terms of human nature.

7. Concluding Remarks

We have tried to interpret Hume's theory of external existence as constructivism. Hume criticises Locke, refusing to regard the external object as an unknown cause of our perceptions (cf. *Essay* 1.1.2). This idea is mistaken because it relies on the unwarranted supposition of a causal relationship between a perception and its cause. In his theory of causation, Hume argues that this picture is illegitimate. To Hume's sceptical mind, it is illegitimate to suppose that our perceptions have objects that are independent of the perceptions themselves, which he sets as the premise of the discussion. Therefore, Hume's fundamental intentions are to explain how we naturally come to entertain the picture of the world as composed of distinct objects, and to explain how the notion of external existence so firmly enters into our mind. According to Humean constructivism, the idea of external existence is a creation of human perception; it is a fictional unification of various perceptions. It must be a fiction because different kinds of senses cannot refer to same object: but the fiction is necessary for us to have a stable picture of the world.

As the *Treatise* aims to explain the whole of human nature, the theory of external object has strong moral implications. Hume's theory of the external body must be considered in reference to his moral theory. His target is to criticise a reason-based understanding of the world and morality. By examining the theory that distinguishes between primary and secondary qualities of objects, Hume reveals the false authority of reason. It is crucial to recognise that the external object obtains

only from a view that sees variable resembling perceptions as belonging to a single object. This means that the general point of view plays a very central role in his epistemology. In this sense, the understanding of his theory of the external object supplies the foundation for his moral theory.

Hume's theory of the external object completes the development of the theory of belief in physical objects. His theory of causation is not fully meaningful where there is no external object established. Belief in stability and reliance is absolutely necessary for a stable life. Hume provides a foundation to stable belief by putting the belief in external existence at its core. The same manner that constitutes the belief in external bodies significantly includes the perception of human beings. Thus Hume established a totally different notion of human beings from the Cartesian *cogito*. It is easy to see that Hume's explanation of a person as an external object leads to the denial of personal identity as posited in the Cartesian *cogito*. Here is the continuity of his theory of external body and that of personal identity.

Humean human beings are the construction of the general point of view; because the general point of view perceives human beings, it is the moral point of view. Here is the true foundation of the morality of human existence. It is possible to think that by explaining human beings as independent beings who are capable of spontaneous action, Hume provides the naturalistic explanation to the notion of human right which is formulated in overly moral terms such as Lockean liberty, or Kantian "freedom" as "autonomy". Hume's Copernican turn corresponds to the conversion of the relationship between "is" and "ought", or the natural perception and the moral perception. We must respect other people not because we ought to be moral in the first place, but rather because as other people are recognised as objective beings, it is natural to treat them accordingly. In this way, Hume's theory of external objects provides a naturalistic foundation to the notion of human right, which will be fully developed in his theory of justice.

Through his theory of the external bodies, Hume has prepared the stage on which moral activities can take place. By the end of Book 1 of the *Treatise*, Hume's theory has developed from the basic unit of perceptions to this creation of the physical world as human world. Upon this ground, in Books 2 and 3, he bases his

theory of the interaction of sentiments among people, and the creation of political society, to which we will now turn.

Chapter Five:

Sympathy and the General Point of View

Part 1: Sympathy and Communication

Introduction

This chapter attempts to read Hume's theory of sympathy as a consistent development of the theory of perception in Hume's *Treatise*. Hume's theory of perceptions enters into a new stage with his discussion of the passions in Book 2. This development signifies something crucial much beyond a mere change in topic. Prior to this there were no full fledged human beings in Hume's epistemology; no human beings with emotion, feeling and passion. Abstract ideas, custom, causation, and external bodies were all explained only through the association of perceptions. After discussing the topics that deal with the setting in which human activities are conducted, a theory that explains the "blood and tears" of human beings naturally follows. Thus, the central theme of Book 2 of the *Treatise* is passion. In this chapter, I argue that Hume's theory of sympathy explains the perception of human sentiments which enables communication and moral relationships.

Among the many philosophical issues in the *Treatise*, Book 2 is the least discussed among Hume commentators. I attempt to clarify its significance to Hume's entire theory. My view is that Hume's theory of passion explains sociability. In Book 1, Hume deals with the physical perception *per se*, but in Book 2, he deals with the social perception of physical objects. Hume deals with the external object in relation to our "social", as opposed to physical, behaviour that is based on the pleasant or painful impression of things. This at the same time means that human relationships in general are composed in relation to the recognition of the social value of things, which leads to the foundation of the system of property. Therefore, Hume's theory of passion prepares the way for the idea of justice. The primary function of sympathy is nothing other than "perception". Hume's idea of sympathy explains the perception of

other people's sentiments in like manner to how we perceive the social value of objects. It creates a direct human relationship in the form of "communication" that consists in sharing the same sentiments. Communication enables human beings to engage in co-operative action. Hume's theory of passion, therefore, has a close link to his epistemology and moral theory. I clarify that Hume's theory of morality based on sympathy signifies a consistent criticism of realist understandings of morality.[143]

In section 1, I clarify that Hume regards passions as a vehicle of social recognition, and that Hume states in his theory of pride and humility the mechanism by which one's possessions and behaviours produce the evaluation of the self. In section 2, I examine Hume's definition of pride and show that sympathy is based on the fact of perception, and explains rather than justifies human relations. In section 3, I discuss the connection between sympathy and the general point of view.

1. The significance of Pride and Humility

Hume regards passions as "reflective impressions" (T 2.1.1.1; SBN 275). Like other perceptions in general, passions are not an innate quality, and are produced through a process that is freed from immediate reaction. Because of this openness to the world, passions can represent an individual's situation, and serve as the basis of a human relationship which is the central theme of Hume's discussion in Book 2 of the *Treatise*. Hume focuses on passion in order to deal with the human interactions that are obviously beyond physical contacts. In his dealings with passion, he denies the assumption that human beings are independent of each other. Hume sees that the perception of the self is created out of interactions of passions, in other words, the self is a product of human relationships (cf. Rorty, 1990). This is clearly a criticism of the Hobbesian method of introspection based on methodological individualism (see Chapter 6). Hobbes believes that only when one reflects upon his own mind can one know what others think. It is true that human beings have relationship with each other also in Hobbes; they have the sentiments of pity, or benevolence. But all of

[143] Hume's concept of sympathy has much in common with Spinoza's concept of *imitatio affectuum* (Spinoza, 1985: *Ethics*, part 3, prop. 27, shol.).

those sentiments originate in a unilateral relationship toward others, and can be reduced to the desire for self-preservation (cf. Herdt, 1997: Ch. 1). Hobbes writes,

> Grief, for the Calamity of another, is pity; and ariseth from the imagination that the like calamity may befall himself; and therefore is called also compassion, and in the phrase of this present time a fellow-feeling. (*Leviathan* 43)

Hobbesian theory implies a hedonistic picture of human motivation, according to which all human actions are motivated by self-interest. This is because Hobbes's theory of motivation is based on a mechanical theory according to which motion is determined solely by the cause that immediately precedes it.[144] Hume criticises this understanding because it is based on an unwarranted assumption that human perceptions are determined directly by the immediately preceding sensations.[145]

Hume finds an initial clue for refuting Hobbesian individualism in the common phenomena of human nature that we in fact feel "pride and humility". Pride and humility are self-directed sentiments whose counterparts, when directed to others, are love and hatred. He indicates that there is an enigma about feeling pride and humility.[146] Pride and humility, though they are opposite sentiments, have the same object, the self. However, the self cannot be their sole cause because the object and the cause of pride and humility are different. This is a peculiar point that is not seen in the perceptions of external things; external things are at once the object and the cause of perceptions. The cause of pride must be something that causes good effects, and that of humility must be something that causes bad effects. In addition, the cause of pride and humility must be something that is close to the object of pride, because unless the object is closely related to the self, it cannot cause these passions. Hume

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[144] In fact, this is why Hobbes' explanation of society is not described as a historical process but as a sudden creation by covenant.

[145] Locke emphasises the importance for human beings to suspend immediate desires. For Locke human freedom enables us to suspend our direct desire (*Essay* 2.21.53).

[146] As pride and humility represent a cardinal vice and a cardinal virtue in Christian ethics, this can be regarded as Hume's challenge to Christian ethics.

maintains, therefore, that there must be "double relations" of impressions and ideas: between the impression of the cause and the self, and between the idea of the cause and the self. Hume explains the double relations as follows.

> That cause, which excites the passion, is related to the object, which nature has attributed to the passion; the sensation, which the cause separately produces, is related to the sensation of passion: From this double relation of ideas and impressions, the passion is deriv'd. The one idea is easily converted into its cor-relative; and the one impression into that, which resembles and corresponds to it: With how much greater facility must this transition be made, where these movements mutually assist each other, and the mind receives a double impulse from the relations both of its impressions and ideas (T 2.1.5.5; SBN 286-287).

It is noteworthy that the transition of impressions is the central principle in Hume's theory of causation. Hume mentions that the hypothesis of the double relation can be compared to the theory of causation (Cf. T 2.1.5.11;SBN 289). In Hume's example, someone's good house causes a pleasant impression to others. The vivacity of the pleasant impression is discharged through the relation of ideas between the object and the self, to the idea of the self, and thus produces an impression of pride. In this way, one feels pride in oneself. In pride and humility, the impressions of pleasant objects that initially belong to others are transferred into the self of the possessor as the subjective impression of pride. The impression of pride, in turn, gives rise to the idea of the self as the object of pride. Regarding the relationship between the object and the subject, impressions of objects are easily transferred to the impressions of the self. Here is seen an interchangeability of the *loci* of sentiments. Phenomena of pride and humility evidence that perception occurs prior to the idea of the self.

Feeling pride is to perceive other people's impressions as one's own. To be proud of something is to feel a pleasant impression about oneself because of some object that is related to oneself. Unless other people find pleasant impressions in the object, one cannot feel proud about it. In this sense, pride is a social sentiment. In the process, mere physical objects are transformed into social values. The social nature

of pride and humility creates a pattern of social behaviour regarding the possession of external things; people naturally prefer to possess those things that cause pride, and to avoid those that cause humility. Therefore, this eventually leads to the foundation of a system of property (cf. T 2.1.10). The mechanism that causes pride or humility can be applied to human behaviours that cause pleasant or painful impressions to other people. Those behaviours that cause pleasant effects produce pride, and those that cause painful effects produce humility. Therefore, human behaviours can be socially evaluated in accordance with their effects on other people (cf. 2.1.7). In this way, moral evaluation is made in the similar manner that the possession of external objects is perceived by human beings.

2. Explanation and Justification of Sympathy

After discussing pride and humility, Hume deals with "the love of fame" (T 2.1.11). This topic is a variation on the time-honoured topic of "reputation" in Locke (*Essay*, 2.28.10-2). The concept of sympathy appears for the first time in the section which can be rightly regarded as an application of the principle of pride and humility. Some commentators think that Hume does not give a definition of sympathy despite the fact that he attaches great importance to the concept (Mercer, 1995: 437). However, it seems to be Hume's strategy to explore sympathy through the general functions of passions. In other words, for Hume, it is necessary to think of sympathy in reference to human experiences of the transference of sentiments.

The basic function of Humean sympathy is to convert ideas into impressions (Cf. T 2.2.4.7; SBN 354). This function cannot be ignored because Hume does not think that sentiments leap from mind to mind. However, in order to have a more comprehensive understanding of sympathy, it is necessary to clarify the conditions that produce sympathy as well as its practical implications. Hume thinks that the function of sympathy is to receive the sentiments of others.

> No quality of human nature is more remarkable, both in itself and in its consequences, than that propensity we have to sympathize with others, and to receive by communication their inclinations and sentiments, however different from, or even contrary to our own. (T

2.1.11.2; SBN 316)

It is crucial to understand that passions and sentiments are a peculiar object of perception in that they can have completely different qualities, according to the perspective of the observer. The same sentiment has a different quality for the person who causes it and one who merely observes it. Nevertheless, we seem to be capable of attaining a common perception of a sentiment. For example when we witness the misfortune of other people, we are capable of having painful moral sentiments, despite having no direct experience of the cause. There must be some mechanism that makes this possible. Hume's concept of sympathy should first of all be regarded as an attempt to identify this mechanism; for an individual to understand the sentiments of others, that person must somehow have the capacity to feel other's sentiments as his own. However, it must be further clarified what it means to have the same sentiments as others. Sentiments themselves are not an entity that can be identified in terms of strength or quality. It is well known that Hume makes no difference between impressions and ideas except in terms of their force or liveliness. Hume says,

> The idea of ourselves is always intimately present to us, and conveys a sensible degree of vivacity to the idea of any other object, to which we are related. This lively idea changes by degrees into a real impression; these two kinds of perception being in a great measure the same, and differing only in their degree of force and vivacity. (T 2.2.4.7; SBN 354)

It is important to note that the equivalence of ideas and impressions means that there is no difference in terms of their cognitive content (Ardal, 1966: 43). The difference that sympathy brings to ideas is not mere increase of strength; it is the change of attachment of the ideas. Before the working of sympathy, the sentiments of others are known only as ideas that belong to other people. But after the working of sympathy, the same ideas become impressions that belong to the self because one's

present sentiments are always impressions. Therefore, sympathy is a means to share with others a similar attitude toward their situation.[147] What actually takes place in sympathy is not so much a mere increase of vivacities as a change of vectors of the sentiments. Therefore, as Stroud maintains, it is possible to regard sympathy as a mechanism that makes people adopt the perceptions of others without taking into account the difference between the self and the other (see Stroud, 1977: 198).[148]

Hume is conscious that he has no fewer rivals in his theory of sympathy than in other topics.[149] There is ample evidence in the *Treatise* that Hume is very aware of the criticism that his theory of sympathy contradicts some of our common experiences. In the first place, it is necessary to remember that Hume focuses on pride and humility because they are common phenomena. He takes it for granted that sympathy "is not only conspicuous in children … but also in men of the greatest judgement and understanding" (T 2.1.11.2; SBN 316). He even insists that opinions as well as sentiments are shared among people by sympathy.

Hume supplies a very elaborate explanation for why the fact that we do not always feel as other people do does not contradict his basic theory. Most briefly, Hume ascribes the dysfunction of sympathy to the insufficiency of the double relation of impressions and ideas (Cf. T 2.1.6). If the insufficient double relation causes the dysfunction, it proves that the double relation is the necessary condition of sympathy. Hume also maintains that there is a force that exerts contrary effects to sympathy, called the principle of "comparison" (T 2.2.8; SBN 372f.). A comparison with others prevents the working of sympathy and causes "malice and envy" which represent our tendency to enjoy the misery, and to hate the happiness of others. By this principle, Hume provides an alternative account to the Hobbesian thesis that

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[147] Stroud asserts that the feeling of sympathy is "the same general affective quality" (Stroud, 1977: 198).

[148] Lipkin criticises this view. However, Lipkin's argument is defective as he deliberately ignores the difference of the concept between the *Treatise* and the *Enquiry* (Lipkin, 1987: 18-32).

[149] Other than Francis Hutcheson, other opponents include, Hobbes, Mandeville, Schaftesbury and, Joseph Butler before him. Moreover, Hume's theory of sympathy is harshly criticised by later generations, most of all by Jeremy Bentham who owes the basic idea of utilitarianism to Hume. Bentham criticises the principle of sympathy and antipathy as "caprice", "sentimentatism", or "ipsedixitism" (Bentham, 1955: 4-9). Post humously commentators ascribe utilitarianism to Hume mostly when they criticise him. Thus, Hume is blamed from both sides.

human beings are naturally selfish. Hume thinks that malice and envy are not evidence of man's inherent selfishness, because they are social sentiments themselves. At the same time, they are compatible with the working of sympathy; in order to envy other people's happiness, we need to feel the pleasure of others through sympathy to find that our own situation is less gratifying.

Hobbes asserts that sympathy is reduced to the sentiment of self-love. He claims that sympathy occurs from imagining that the same thing happens to ourselves; there is no sympathy that shares another person's happiness without reference to self-interest. He sees sympathy as in fact a form of love; deriving pleasure from the happiness of others, which is originally the Epicurean view.[150] This opposition reveals an important point that unless one acts with no regard for one's exclusive interest, it cannot be properly regarded as the working of sympathy. In other words, the working of sympathy is equivalent to the denial of egoistic-individualism. This also leads to a fundamental problem whether the good is pleasant and naturally done on its own, apart from self-interests. Hume criticises the egoist-interpretation of sympathy in the *Enquiries* as follows.

> Now as these advantages are enjoyed by the person possessed of the character, it can never be *self-love* which renders the prospect of them agreeable to us, the spectators, and prompts our esteem and approbation. No force of imagination can convert us into another person, and make us fancy, that we, being that person, reap benefit from those valuable qualities, which belong to him. Or if it did, no celerity of imagination could immediately transport us back, into ourselves, and make us love and esteem the person, as different from us. (EPM 6.3; SBN 234)

In short, Hume denies the possibility of basing sympathy on egoistic-individualism because it is incompatible with the nature of imagination to reduce other love to self-love. Furthermore, this hypothesis cannot explain the sympathy of painful sentiments; based on the egoistic picture of human beings, it cannot happen that one sympathizes with painful sentiment in order to make oneself painful. Adam

Smith allies with Hume in refusing to ascribe self-love to the sentiments of sympathy. Smith says,

> Sympathy, however, cannot, in any sense, be regarded as a selfish principle... this imaginary change is not supposed to happen to me in my own person and character, but in that of the person with whom I sympathize... I consider what I should suffer if I were you, and I not only change circumstances with you, but I change persons and characters. My grief, therefore, is entirely upon your account, and not in the least upon my own. It is not, therefore, in the least selfish. A man may sympathize with a woman in child-bed; though it is impossible that he should conceive himself as suffering her pains in his own proper person and character. (TMS 317)

Obviously, it is absurd to reduce the pleasure and pain of other people to self-interest.[151] However, the theoretical framework of self-interest theory is by no means absurd. The Hobbesian explanation is not illogical but only a due consequence of a strict individualist framework. In order to refute the individualist explanation, it is necessary to provide a theory that allows individuals to obtain non-individual sentiments. Hobbes's mechanical atomistic position prevents him from giving a non-individualistic perspective (see Chapter 6). This is exactly what Hume tries to provide by his theory of indirect passions. Hume's theory of perception, that comes prior to his concept of individuals, is capable of identifying the foundation that is common among different individuals. Hence, with the theory of sympathy, Hume breaks the Hobbesian individualist conception of society.[152]

There is another objection to the Humean concept of sympathy. According to this objection, even if sympathy does exist, it is not of any contagious nature as Hume maintains, but stems from the rational judgement of the individuals. This is a Smithian criticism to Hume. More fundamentally, this criticism is concerned with the relationship between sentiments and reason. To take the conclusion first, Hume

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[150] Herdt points out that this is why Hutcheson opposes Hume (Herdt, 1997: 52).
[151] Herdt says, "If it is absurd to say that we approve of someone in order to feel pleasure, it is yet more absurd to say that we disapprove of someone in order to feel pain" (Herdt, 1997: 58).

considers this a confusion of the explanation and justification of sympathy. Hume presents sympathy as a perception, and not a result of rational judgement. Perception is fundamentally imposed on human beings: we do not have control over our perceptions. If, for example, a person perceives merely some percussion of sounds, when hearing some other person "crying" out of distress, it mean that the person does not perceive the sentiments of the other person properly. It is possible we judge that the crying is not a proper reaction to the situation. Thus, the judgement, although impossible without the perception, is different from the perception of the situation. Hume's sympathy is concerned with original perception as material for judgement.

The Humean "general point of view" can be understood as involved in the mechanism of sympathy. To have sympathy means to perceive someone else's sentiments as they appear to other people in general. In this sense, sympathy is a mechanism of the synthesis of the particularity and the generality of one's sentiment. Without sympathy based on the general point of view, we have only our individual view, and cannot behave "humanly".[153] Just as someone who did not feel heat from fire would fall afoul of fire, those who cannot understand another person's sentiments via sympathy can never really communicate with others. Thus Hume indicates the perception of sentiments is on a par with the perception of nautral objects. To achieve proper perception of sentiments is to experience a common kind of reaction. We will not be able to deal with fire properly unless we feel its heat. In the same manner, if we do not feel sad by seeing people's distress, we do not deal with the situation morally.[154] In this way, Hume conceives morality based on sympathy in a similar manner as causal reactions (see Chapter 3).

As a pleasant, agreeable or useful object causes in us a feeling of pleasure, so we feel pleasure by perceiving a happy face, and feel pain, by perceiving a sad face. This idea is expanded to Hume's basic tenet in his moral theory that "utility

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[152] Hume's theory of sympathy prepares the way for his criticism of social contract theory (see Chapter 7).
[153] It is arguable that Hume uses "humanity" in the *Enquiry* in this sense.
[154] This relates to the problem of the sensible knave who deliberately takes advantage of morality. Hume's theory of sympathy implies that such a knave cannot be happy for his criminal success based on miseries of other people (see Chapter 7).

pleases".[155] To approve something means that we try to promote it, and to disapprove something means that we try to avoid it. In this way, sympathy is closely connected to other-regarding behaviour. In other words, to have sympathy means to act in the place of the person with whom we are sympathizing. Therefore, moral behaviour involves taking the sentiments of other people through sympathy as the motivation of one's own behaviour. For example, the job of a doctor is not to make money, nor to cure himself but other people. Were it not for the original tendency of acting for others, there could be no sociability nor any development of the division of labour. In this sense, the working of sympathy is decidedly fundamental for social cooperation and the development of social institutions.[156]

There seems to be another problem in accepting Hume's theory. It is certain that there are cases in which we should not feel sympathy. For example, we should not sympathize with a gratified thief. Because we understand that not all of our sympathy may be appropriate, we seek for a standard of justification of our sentiments. Hume's theory of sympathy implies the denial of human rationality because the mechanism of sympathy is common with animals.[157] This is why Hume elaborates at length, explaining the exceptions to his theory. However, there is no worry about the fact that we are influenced by wrong or inappropriate sentiments. It is not because such sentiments are not infectious, nor because we can rationally avoid being infected by them, but because other sentiments are infectious as well. The wrongness or rightness of a sentiment is not determined, when it is considered singularly. It is realised only by understanding the fact that if some sentiments are inappropriate, other sentiments will emerge with counter effects. This is possible because sympathy is not restricted to the present or the immediate sentiments of a

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[155] Section 5 of *An Enquiry of the Principle of Morals* reads "Why Utility Pleases". Obviously, the answer consists in the same principle as sympathy. This is further evidence that Hume retains sympathy in *Enquiries*, even if the direct reference disappears. This also means that sympathy is a part of the system of the theory of perception rather than a practical morality.

[156] What about the activities of the philosopher? Plato in his *Republic*, Book 7 (520 b-c) asserts that the fundamental activity of the philosopher must not be to gratify his own desire for knowledge. He must return to the "cave" in order to teach the "prisoners" even at the cost of, in the case of Socrates, his life. This is related to the Kantian notion of the "priority of practical reason", and implies the idea of education and enlightenment.

[157] Hume discusses the pride and humility of animals in the same way as humans (cf. T 2.1.12: "Of the pride and humility of animals").

closed circle. Though there is no universal sympathy, we can in principle share in the sentiments of all those concerned in the end.

"Wrong sentiments" can be understood as lacking generality determined by the general point of view. Wrong sentiments are disapproved by most members of the society because of the painful causal effects they are typically involved in, and are corrected by massive opposing influences, which also presuppose the working of sympathy. For example, sympathy with the self-gratification of a successful thief is more than nullified by sympathy with the injured sentiments of his victims, and by sympathy with ordinary people who accept the functioning moral norm that prohibits stealing. Thus, the norm is derived from the sentiments of the general populace. Hume denies any other standard against which the moral value of a sentiment is determined.[158] In this way, sympathy can bring sentiments of the overall effects of the situation to a "judicious observer". Hume says,

> In order to cause a transition of passions, there is requir'd a double relation of impressions and ideas, nor is one relation sufficient to produce this effect. But that we may understand the full force of this double relation, we must consider, that 'tis not the present sensation alone or momentary pain or pleasure, which determines the character of any passion, but the whole bent or tendency of it from the beginning to the end. (T 2.2.9.2; SBN 381)

There is always a tension between explanation and justification in Hume. The relationship between explanation and justification is a variation of the "is-ought" problem. Hume's theory of belief is a theory for explaining beliefs rather than a theory for showing which among competing beliefs is justifiable (cf. Chapter 3). Hume focuses on the elucidation of human beliefs because even the justified belief must nonetheless be a belief in the Humean sense I have already defined. In regard to sympathy, it is more important to explore the natural mechanism of the perception of sentiments, which by its implication can serve as a standard of justification.

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[158] This makes a sharp contrast to Adam Smith's assertion that the judgement of our conscience can go against the opinion of all mankind. I will discuss this point in Part 2 of this Chapter.

3. Sympathy and Communication

Pride and humility are produced through the transition of impressions between object and subject; the impression that is entertained regarding the object, is transferred into an impression regarding the self. In other words, "objective" sentiments become "subjective" through sympathy. Impressions themselves belong neither to the subject nor to the object. In this way, sympathy provides a point of view that comprehends particular perspectives. Hume says,

> in sympathy our own person is not the object of any passion, nor is there any thing, that fixes our attention on ourselves; as in the present case, where we are suppos'd to be actuated with pride or humility. Ourself, independent of the perception of every other object, is in reality nothing: For which reason we must turn our view to external objects; and 'tis natural for us to consider with most attention such as lie continguous to us, or resemble us. (T 2.2.2.17; SBN 340-341)

As I have argued in Chapter 4, Hume's "external objects" that "lie continguous to us, or resemble us" include other people. Hume thinks that the perception of ourselves crucially depends on our relations with those around us.[159] He says that the change of ideas into impressions "proceeds from certain views and reflections" (T 2.1.11.3; SBN 317). Hume insists that the following maxim must be established,

> *That 'tis not the present sensation or momentary pain or pleasure, which determines the character of any passion, but the general bent or tendency of it from the beginning to the end.* (T 2.2.9.11; SBN 384-385)

Therefore, sympathy is a development of the sentiments of people in general. This means that one's sentiment and situation are seen not from a single perspective, but are seen and considered from a general point of view. In this sense, sympathy is

not limited to present sentiments and situations, and can extend even to the people who are not present.

> 'Tis certain, that sympathy is not always limited to the present moment, but that we often feel by communication the pains and pleasures of others, which are not in being, and which we only anticipate by the force of imagination (T 2.2.9.13; SBN 385).

This expansion of the idea of sympathy suggests the expansion of human relationships. Sympathy introduces a social dimension to a human relationship by liberating human sentiments from the direct and merely personal reaction to the situation. In this way, particular impressions obtain general recognition. Therefore, sympathy consists in the creation of a general point of view that takes the form of the circulation of custom and shared opinion in a society.

Hume confirms the relation-centred character of passions. The sentiments of other people are transmitted through the relations in which they are situated. Sympathy is not only produced through relations; it has a corollary effect of strengthening relationships. Sympathy is the basis of human relationships, enabling "communication", which is one of the central concepts in Hume's *Treatise*. It is to be remembered that the primary function of general ideas is to make communication possible (cf. chapter 2). On the basis of communication, human relations and society are established. Communication is more fundamental than agreement and consent as they only signify its final appearances.[160] Because of physical limitations, individual human beings can have direct sentiments only of themselves. Without sympathy, other people appear to be no different from mere bodies with arbitrary movement. Communication that is based on sympathy, a form of trans-subjectivity, enables us to attain mutual understanding. What is communicated through sympathy is not restricted to mere sentiments; on the basis of sentiments, agreement among people's opinions can be attained.

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[159] There is a striking similarity between this passage and Smith's theory of sympathy. See footnote 244.

[160] This leads to Hume's criticism of social contract theory (see Chapter 8).

Sympathy also serves as a foundation of our beliefs. This is true of our all beliefs including natural sciences. Science cannot be established without taking into account the sentiments of other people. History is first possible because we naturally receive the sentiments of other people in their original form. Natural sciences typically develop in the context of the society at large. Similarly, in all human endeavours, one's intellectual appreciation is founded upon the sentiment of sympathy. As opposed to reason, sympathy typically represents the working of human nature. To deny the Humean notion of sympathy is to deny a fundamental condition for science. Therefore, Hume is critical of the theories that allege reason to be their source, because they pretend that they can do without sympathy, though they derive their opinion furtively through sympathy.[161]

The other fundamental function of the Humean sympathy is to cause partiality, not impartiality, of sentiments in individuals. Partiality means to take care of a particular need. Hume's morality is based on partiality as there is no impression that corresponds to impartiality. Everything owes its existence to some partiality, and every sentiment is partial including the moral sentiments.[162] Where there is a partiality or an imbalance of sentiments, nature tends to work to put them right. As long as human life continues, there will always be some imbalance that requires adjustment.

Hume thinks that human behaviour is motivated by that imbalance, rather than by an impartial ideal that has no root in reality. The most human beings can do for themselves is to try to meet this requirement. Parents attend to their children, and workers listen to their colleagues, *etc.*. Requests are issued bilaterally and, thus, reciprocally. All we do is to address the particular cause issued by sentiments of our friends, family, neighbours, and others, with the provision of justice in civil society.[163] Hume recognises nothing special other than this in our virtuous behaviour. It is impossible to act for those particular distant people whom we do not have

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[161] The situation is the same with regard to the idea of objectivity.
[162] Adam Smith, on the other hand, asserts that impartiality is the fundamental moral quality.
[163] In "Of Parties in General", Hume remarks that one of the many dangers of a divided society is that members of such a society have difficulty in maintaining a stable sympathetic understanding

sympathy for. Also, people are only justified in taking charge of their proximate relations, because "distant" people have their own neighbours. In this principle, all are placed under the mutual care of each other.[164] The "distance" here is not measured by the spatial relationship only. Neighbourhood is defined as any situation that enters into one's perception as perceptions are the only material to compose one's moral world. Thus Hume's sympathy-based morality can be understood as an integral part of his criticism of realist moral theories. This is why Hume elucidates morality as a matter of perception, and this is why moral sentiment squares with the condition of causation.

Therefore, it is a mistake to think that the motivation for human activities consists in utility, or in any dogmatic ideal, religious or ideological. It is also groundless to suppose that some unseen providence will automatically work to produce the best result out of the imbalance. On the basis of the adjustment, the redistribution of property can take place. The real authority of opinion consists in this function as well; opinions do not indicate the moral law or the standard of morality, but represent people's sentiments to be sympathised.[165] In all of these, Humean sympathy signifies a vehicle that lets the excess or deficit of passions make their way to equilibrium.

Ultimately, there is no other ground but sympathy with others for engaging in social activities. Precisely because of this, to deceive others by pretending false emotions or opinions out of self-interest is a vice. In the fundamental manner, trust is the fundamental principle of human relationships. People are not responsible to believe the false emotions or opinions of others and to act on them, because the working of human nature binds everyone. We cannot decide whether or not to sympathise with another's opinion in the first instance; sympathy occurs prior to judgement.[166] With the assumption of sympathy as a natural human phenomenon, communication of opinions can take place, which leads to the system of consent and

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of the needs and interests of those around them: when interests are divided, it becomes difficult to reconcile self-interest and public interest (cf. Rorty, 1990: 267).

[164] As I will discuss in Chapter 7 this is the necessary condition for establishing property.

[165] This is Hume's basic criticism of Locke's social contract theory.

[166] This is a crucial criticism of Adam Smith. I will discuss this problem in Part 2 of this Chapter.

promise. Thus, Hume's theory of sympathy is very fundamental to his theory of morals; without the working of sympathy, the system of human interaction can hardly be started.[167]

4. Concluding Remarks

We have explained Hume's theory of sympathy as a development of his theory of perception with the consistent theme of criticising the realist theory of morality. The central significance of Hume's theory of passion is to construct the social recognition of physical objects and human actions. We have seen that because of the transference of passions, physical objects come to assume a social significance. Human relationships are organised pivoting on the property relationship. As can be seen in Hume's theory of justice, human beings are given social recognition as a property owners. Therefore, human relationships are reflected in property relationships. Hume's theory of passions is first of all a theory for explaining this mechanism.

Hume understands people's character in the same manner as property. Sympathy, as the transference of passions, has the sentiments of other people as their original objects. The most significant function of sympathy is the recognition of the sentiments of other people. The character of a person is determined by the effects of his own action. In terms of perceptions, both property and action are qualities that produce some pleasant or painful sentiments in others. In accordance with the effects of one's actions, one receives moral recognition from other people. Therefore, sympathy enables us to recognise the moral quality of other people.

Evaluation of actions and possessions are incorporated into the human world through sympathy. Sympathy provides necessary perceptions that produce a variety of human communication on the basis of which moral norms and institutions are created. It has become clear that sympathy indicates the direction of human sentiments that create stability among human relationships. In this sense the theory of passions in Book 2 is theoretically related to the moral theory in Book 3.

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[167] Hume's theory of sympathy is very fundamental to his theory of promise, without the working of sympathy, the system of promise cannot be explained. Hobbes stipulated the system of

Part 2: The General Point of View" and Smith's "Impartial Spectator

Introduction

Adam Smith, best friend of Hume and renowned father of modern economics, is the best philosopher to consider by contrast the distinctiveness of Hume's theory of sympathy.[168] In this part, I deal with Smith's theory of sympathy to elucidate the uniqueness of Hume's sympathy for understanding morality and human sociability. Smith develops a theory of sympathy derived from Hume and places it in the centre of his own theory of morality. Smith's unique development of the concept of sympathy serves to highlight the peculiarity of the Humean theory of sympathy (cf. Blackburn, 1998a: Ch.7). Smith's sympathy enables moral judgement, while Hume's enables moral perception. It is also argued that they have a different underlying idea of the concept, especially in regard to providence, and that the general point of view and impartial spectator identify their distinctive theories. My aim is to show the disjuncture between Hume and Smith, and I confine the discussion of Smith to the theory of moral judgment.[169]

In section 1, I explain the basic theory of Smith's sympathy, and point out a problem which can be found in it; Smith's sympathy consists in the agreement of sentiments between the moral agent and observer, but it is not clear how to assure the agreement. In section 2, I argue that the above problem provides a motivation for Smith to revise *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, in the direction of seeking for a justification of sympathy. I clarify the reason Smith's sympathy has to deal with the sentiments of an impartial spectator. In section 3, I examine the difference between Hume and Smith. And in section 4, I argue that Hume's general point of view and Smith's impartial spectator respectively represent their core characteristics of their

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promise as an artificial arrangement, precisely because there is no sympathy in his system.

[168] As a student, Smith read Hume's *Treatise*, and their friendship started from around 1748 and lasted until Hume's death (Ross, 1995: xix).

moral theories. I clarify that Hume's general point of view and Smith's impartial spectator represent opposite understandings of normativity.

1. Adam Smith's Theory of Sympathy

As a great philosopher himself, Smith reconceived the notion of Hume's "sympathy". Smith's theory, by virtue of the advantage of being published later than Hume's, is a development from Hume's. The fact that Smith adopts the concept of sympathy from Hume as the core concept of his moral philosophy shows the importance of the concept in Hume's theory. Moreover, Smith develops his concept of "the impartial spectator" from Hume's concept of "a judicious spectator" (Raphael, 1975: 87). Also, the centrality of the concepts of "praise" and "blame" in Smith reflects Hume's argument regarding "pride" and "humility".

As we have seen, the basic function of sympathy in Hume is the perception of the sentiments of others, and to convert the ideas of others into impressions. Hume did not deny benevolence as virtue; it merely was not adopted as the basis of Hume's moral system because Hume tries to cover the whole spectrum of moral perceptions. Benevolence can be at most a part of moral perception. The principle of benevolence is too narrow to cover all virtues, and if it were the only moral principle, it could not explain vices. On the other hand, Hume's theory of sympathy, by focusing on perceptions, enables us to explain the dynamic formation of a new society, or a society whose central characteristic lies in a constant flow of money, goods, and people (cf. Phillipson, 1981: 19-40). Smith obviously allies with Hume in this understanding, and focuses on the human relationship rather than a static moral quality inherent in individual human beings independent of and prior to social interactions.

As a critical departure from Hutcheson's theory that focuses on the characteristics of a virtuous person, Smith begins his *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* by introducing the concept of sympathy. This also signifies a difference from Hume who starts all Books of the *Treatise* from the most primitive framework

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[169] For a comprehensive discussion of Smith's moral theory (e.g. Griswold, 1999: *passim*).

of perceptions. Unlike Locke or Hume, Smith does not discuss epistemology, and presupposes human beings who are equipped with the capacity for sympathy.[170] Sympathy is a means for adjusting changing human relationship. By focusing on sympathy, Smith tries to grasp morality in terms of human relationships. Smith confers a unique meaning to the concept of sympathy different also from Hume. The most important function of sympathy in Smith is to enable people to approve or disapprove of the moral attitude of a person.

Smith indicates in the 4th edition of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* a subtitle, which reads "An Essay towards an Analysis of the Principles by which Men naturally judge concerning the Conduct and Character, first of their Neighbours, and afterwards of themselves". The subtitle is significant because it informs us of the two important features of his theory. First, it is a theory of a moral "judgement". Second, Smith presupposes both the person who makes a moral judgement and his neighbours who are to be judged. And the morality of oneself is to be judged after the manner that one judges his neighbours, i.e. by regarding himself as his neighbour.

Therefore, in Smith, sympathy is an important means for making a moral judgement, rather than representing any normative sentiment like benevolence. Smithean sympathy obtains where there is a concurrence of sentiments between the person who observes the situation and the person who is affected by the action. One imagines oneself to be in the situation of other people, and compares the sentiment of other people with the one he would feel were he in the position of the person observed. If the two sentiments are the same in degree, then sympathy obtains. An occurrence of sympathy signifies approval, and an absence of sympathy signifies disapproval.

Smith observes as a fact of human nature that sympathy is in itself a pleasant sense of harmony between people, and the natural agreeableness of experiencing the approval of other people urges one to seek for sympathy. Seeking the approval of others is alleged to be the strongest inclination of human beings

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[170] In contrast, Hume's theory is about the emergence of "human beings" as such.

second only to self-preservation.[171] This is the Smithean reason to be moral. Generally, an observer, as a third person, tends to have weaker sentiments than the person primarily concerned. Therefore, in order to attain sympathy most effectively, the observer should try to raise the level of his sentiment, and the person primarily concerned should try to lower the level of his sentiment so that even the third person "can go along with" his sentiment toward the situation. In most cases, primary and stronger efforts are required of the person affected rather than the observer. Sympathy thus established signifies the stable human relationship between people, and guarantees the stability of a society. It is to be remembered that the stability of a society specifically relies on the stability of the sentiments of the ordinary people in the society. The spirit of fair-play represents the moral standard. Smith famously remarks:

> In the race for wealth, and honours, and preferments, he may run as hard as he can, and strain every nerve and every muscle, in order to outstrip all his competitors. But if he should jostle, or throw down any of them, the indulgence of the spectators is entirely at the end. It is a violation of fair play, which they cannot admit of. (TMS 83)

Smith's explanation sensitively captures a new kind of human relationship in the expanding commercial society where the dominating human relationship is that with an indefinite number of anonymous persons. In such a society, one has to behave in a way that is approved by ordinary people with whom he has no contact either beforehand or afterward. Only by the approval of the third person, moral behaviours are justified.

However, some problems immediately seem to follow from Smith's theory. First, as Knud Haakonssen once pointed out, Smith does not explain how it is possible for a spectator to recognize a sentiment or a motive of a person apart from the action itself performed by that person (Haakonssen, 1981: 48). The motivation of other people is hidden behind the veil of privacy, as the motivation of an action is not

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[171] Hume seems to think the desire for society is stronger than any other. He says, "A perfect solitude is, perhaps, the greatest punishment we can suffer" (T 2.2.5.15; SBN 363).

a direct object of observation. In order for a comparison to be possible, one has to be able to recognize the intention of the other person with a reasonable degree of accuracy. Besides, the spectator must have known how he would feel were he in the condition of the actor, though it is unlikely he would have experienced the situation himself (cf. Heath, 1998: 58).[172] But it does not seem to work in any efficient manner, if the other's mind is not in principle knowable. In sum, there is a serious difficulty in understanding how the "imaginary exchange of places" can take place (cf. Raynor, 1984: 55).

Secondly, according to Smith, a moral observer primarily deals with the sentiment of an actor, and sees whether he "can go along with" it, were he in the place of that actor. But it is problematic to equate the morality of an action with sentiments, where sentiments and action are different. The motivation of an action is not usually sentiment, nor can the action be merely reduced to sentiment. For example, we would not approve of the good will of a convicted thief, even if his good will were genuine. So if the spectator tries to evaluate the propriety of the motivation, he has to consider other criterion than mere sentiment to see if the motivation is appropriate. But this would divert Smith's theory from a theory of moral sentiment to a different kind of theory.

Furthermore, Smith provides us with a still more difficult problem. According to Smith, in order for sympathy to obtain, bilateral efforts are required; one is required on the part of an observer to strengthen his emotion, and the other is required on the part of the person primarily concerned to weaken his emotion. These two efforts, when combined, first realise the concurrence of two different emotions. It is not, however, clear how it is possible for a third person to supervise these bilateral processes, unless they engage in a face-to-face negotiation like in a market. Smith assumes that sympathy among people's sentiments at the same time signifies the harmony of the society, and of human relationships. But it is still an unwarranted presupposition that a concurrence of sentiments in sympathy coincides with the reality of social order.

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[172] Hume would have no difficulty in this respect, as he clearly says that the sympathy is based on the perceivable present sentiments.

2. Impartial Spectator and the Demigod

Smith thinks that, in a society that is composed of anonymous people; one's behaviour can be regarded as moral when someone who has no prior personal relationship with you approves of you. In this case, it would not be necessary to make sure that no one has an objection about the verdict, because an anonymous member is the objective criterion. If one representative spectator acknowledges some behaviour, this means that the behaviour has obtained the recognition of the society as a whole. When Smith first introduces the concept of an impartial spectator in the first edition of his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, he means by the concept just such a spectator.

> And hence it is, that to feel much for others and little for ourselves, that to restrain our selfish, and to indulge our benevolent affections, constitutes the perfection of human nature; and can alone produce among mankind that harmony of sentiments and passions in which consists their whole grace and propriety. As to love our neighbour as we love ourselves is the great law of Christianity, so it is the great precept of nature to love ourselves as we love our neighbour, or what comes to the same thing, as our neighbour is capable of loving us. (TMS 25)

It is important to notice that the principle of sympathy is in fact the combination of two of the Smith's most important virtues: humanity that consists in sharing the sentiments of other person, and self-command that consists in containing one's own sentiments. These two virtues represent the two most important sources of Smith's moral philosophy, Christianity and Stoic philosophy, respectively. The virtue of humanity is required of the spectator (or the person who regards himself as a spectator). On the other hand, the virtue of self-command is required of the person primarily concerned. Of the two virtues, self-command is more important, because an observer cannot in principle share the violent sentiments of the person primarily concerned, and unrestricted sentiments cause the observer an aversion and thus disapproval. Without self-command, one cannot take a position of an observer, and

self-command means to love oneself with the humanity which is available even to other person. Therefore the two virtues are in fact the two sides of the same coin.

To behave morally means to behave in such a manner that an impartial third person would approve of it. When the moral behaviour of other people is approved by a third person, the behaviour is supposed to be approved unanimously by all the members of the society. This represents a minimum morality.[173] And this third person is what Smith means by the impartial spectator. Smith's impartial spectator specifically means an ordinary person who has no personal interest in the situation. Moral behaviour is impartial not because of any inherent characteristic but because of its being approved by an impartial spectator.

One of the problems that was indicated in the last section finds the possibility of solution with the notion of the impartial spectator. It would not be necessary for both parties to make an effort to attain the concurrence of their sentiments. All that is necessary to secure propriety is to adopt the sentiment of an impartial spectator. People can make a right judgement about themselves only if they can imagine themselves as a third person when considering their own morality. This signifies the understanding of morality that regards "social validity" rather than any particular normative position as the standard of morality. Therefore, the fundamental characteristic of the impartial spectator is that he is considered as a representative of ordinary citizens (cf. Phillipson, 1983: 226-46).

However, Smith's doctrine sees a crucial turn regarding the concept of the impartial spectator. It is in a sense a development that was waiting to happen. Soon after the publication of the first edition of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Gilbert Elliot questioned how it is possible in Smith's theory that one's conscience can go against popular opinion (Reader, 1997: 18-30). In response to this criticism, Smith adds a major correction to the role of impartial spectator in the 2nd edition of the

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[173]Smith even maintains that the beauty and ugliness of one's face is the product of the opinion of other people. He says, "We must view them, neither from our own place nor yet from his, neither with our own eyes nor yet with his, but from the place and with the eyes of a third person, who has no particular connexion with either, and who judges with impartiality between us" (TMS 135).

Theory of Moral Sentiment.[174] In a correspondence to Elliot, Smith hopes that upon the reading of the 2nd edition, he

> will observe that it is intended both to confirm my Doctrine that our judgements concerning our own conduct have always a reference to the sentiments of some other being, and to show that, notwithstanding this, real magnanimity and conscious virtue can support itself under the disapprobation of all mankind. (Reeder, 1997: 19)

This distinction between the judgement of our own conduct and the disapproval of all mankind presupposes the difference between "actual praise" and the "praise-worthiness", which is the most significant distinction in Smith's theory of moral evaluation. In its essence, this is typically a question regarding vanity.[175] Vanity is defined as an attitude to love praise itself even if one is not at all praiseworthy. It is to be noted that the distinction between actual praise and praise-worthiness is exclusively concerned with a moral evaluation about oneself. In so far as one acts as a disinterested spectator who judges the morality of other people, there can be no contradiction between the actual praise and praise-worthiness.[176] Smith asserts that the problem of conscience is peculiar to self-evaluation. "Conscience" orders without regard to, and often in defiance of, public opinions.[177] This is

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[174] Smith witnesses the case in which the actual observers do not always make an appropriate judgement both in person, as in the Calas case, and in general observation. It was Smith's distinctive contribution that he designated the sympathy of "responsibly-minded men of middling rank" as the moral criterion in the emerging new society (Phillipson, 1983: 226-46).

[175] The problem of "vanity" has been the central, if inconspicuous, problem in the history of Western philosophy since Socrates. It occupies a central place because of the intellectual challenge made by Hobbes and Mandeville, and because of the influence of Christianity. Hume develops his theory of sympathy centring on the concept of "pride and humility" apparently in defiance of traditional Christian virtue, and converted it as the base of social unification.

[176] That is derived from the time honoured problem of how to base the non-empirical concept, self, within the framework of empirical explanation.

[177] Raphael and Macfie write in the "introduction" to TMS that "the originality of Adam Smith's impartial spectator lies in his development of the idea so as to explain the source and nature of consciousness, i.e. of a man's capacity to judge his own actions and especially of his sense of duty. On this aspect of ethics the theories of Hutcheson and Hume were undoubtedly lame, as was clear to their rationalist critics" (TMS 15). It is obvious that the terminology of "conscience" signifies a "private" knowledge, rather than its medieval meaning "*conscientia* (joint knowledge)" (OED, 2nd edn., vol. 3: 754), which means to know with others. In this sense, Hume's concept of the general point of view as the moral point of view restores the original

precisely the development that Smith announces in the subtitle of the *Theory of Moral Sentiment*. Smith proceeds to analyse the principles by which men naturally judge the conduct and character of themselves. In the 2nd and especially in the 6th edition of Chapter 2, Part 3, Smith discusses in detail how the differences between actual praise and praise-worthiness, or actual blame and blame-worthiness. The underlying implication of his criticism of vanity is Smith's criticism of Mandeville. It is in this process that he introduces the concept of "demigod" or "the man within the breast" (TMS 131).[178]

Smith thinks that the love of praise-worthiness cannot be derived from the love of praise itself. For, the love of praise is desirable only when the praise is given to the action that is truly praiseworthy. The point is that, here, praise-worthiness has the priority over the actual praise. Smith refuses to base the desirability of praise-worthiness on the actual praise of the public. And the reason why praise-worthiness has priority is that it is nothing but the verdict of the conscience. This is founded upon Smith's natural law theory that prescribes the priority of the right over the good. And the strict correspondence between the right and the good can be found nowhere else other than in the presupposition that the sympathy of an impartial spectator should always be correct. Smith ascribes the authority of conscience that can go against the disapprobation of all mankind to the impartial spectator, leaving his initial position of identifying the impartial spectator with the opinion of the general public.

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sense of conscience from the Cartesian-Lockean modification. The same applies to the concept of sympathy, which originally meant "joint sentiment".

[178] In the 2nd edition, Smith still represents an ambivalent position between public opinion and conscience. Raphael argues that "On the one hand Smith wanted to retain the traditional view that the voice of conscience represents the voice of God and is superior to popular opinion. On the other hand he believed that conscience is initially an effect of social approval and disapproval; in the first instance, *vox populi* is *vox Dei*" (Raphael, 1975: 91). Smith says, "The Author of nature has made man the immediate judge of mankind, and has in this respect, as in many others, created him after his own image, of his brethren" (TMS 128). Although developed conscience is a superior tribunal, "yet, if we enquire into the origin of its institution, its jurisdiction, we shall find, is in a great measure derived from the authority of that very tribunal, whose decisions it so often and so justly reverses" (TMS 129). In the 6th edition, the above quotations are removed as Smith emphasises the priority of conscience. However, if the impartial spectator reaches a different verdict from the opinion of the general public, it must be because the impartial spectator possesses his own criterion of moral judgement. However, Smith does not explain the reason, nor does he think it necessary to give one. It is based on a "self-evident presupposition" (Kleer, 1995: 275-300). See also Hope, 1984: 157-67.

In the later 6th edition, Smith emphasises the distinction between mere sympathetic feeling and approval as the verdict of conscience (cf. Raphael and Macfie, 1976: 17). Smith upgrades the authority of conscience from the impartial spectator to "the demigod within the breast" and to "the all-seeing Judge of the world" (TMS p.131), from the first tribunal by the actual spectator, to the tribunal of conscience and further to "the unerring rectitude" of God's "great tribunal" (*ibid.*). This is precisely the reverse course that he undertook as he first introduced the concept of sympathy as a critical departure from Hutcheson. The development of the concept of Smith's moral observer is in a sense a necessary consequence of his theory of sympathy. Therefore the justification of sympathy ultimately depends on the morality of the observer. So long as sympathy is supposed to be the initial moral criterion, there is no other means for deciding the priority among competing moral opinions, other than by examining the qualification of persons who hold each opinion rather than the content of the opinions themselves.[179] However, this "all-seeing Judge of the world" is anything but the ordinary people who constitute the society to which Smith tries to give philosophical foundation.[180]

3. Smith's Criticism of Hume

Hume and Smith express their difference in their well known correspondence. Hume clearly recognises that their disagreement occurs regarding the connection between sympathy and moral approval. He wrote to Smith that,

> I wish you had more particularly and fully prove'd, that all kinds of Sympathy are necessarily Agreeable. This is the Hinge of your System, & yet you only mention the Matter cursorily in p. 20 [TMS 1.1.2.6, p. 15-16]. Now it would appear that there is a disagreeable Sympathy, as well as an agreeable: And indeed, as the Sympathetic

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[179] In comparison to this, Hume sets the standard of morality in the causal effects of action.
[180] According to Smith, our "happiness in this life is thus, upon many occasions, dependent upon the humble hope and expectation of a life to come: a hope and expectation deeply rooted in human nature; which can alone support its lofty idea of its dignity; can alone illuminate the dreary prospect of its continually approaching mortality, and maintain its cheerfulness under all the heaviest calamities to which, from the disorders of this life, it may sometimes be exposed" (TMS 132).

> Passion is a reflex Image of the principal, it must partake of its Qualities, & be painful where that is so … if all Sympathy was agreeable. A Hospital would be a more entertaining Place than a Ball. … You say expressly, *it is painful to go along with Grief & we always enter into it with Reluctance*. It will probably be requisite for you to modify or explain this Sentiment, & reconcile it to your System. (Creig, 1932: 1:312f.)

Smith replies to Hume's criticism in a footnote of the 2nd edition of TMS (1761) that,

> It has been objected to me that as I found the sentiment of approbation, which is always agreeable, upon sympathy, it is inconsistent with my system to admit any disagreeable sympathy. I answer, that in the sentiment of approbation there are two things to be taken notice of; first the systematic passion of the spectator; and, secondly, the emotion which arises from his observing the perfect coincidence between this sympathetic passion in himself, and the original passion in the person principally concerned. This last emotion, in which the sentiment of approbation properly consists, is always agreeable and delightful. The other may either be agreeable or disagreeable, according to the nature of the original passion, whose features it must always, in some measure, retain. (TMS 46)

This is Smith's answer to Hume's criticism, clarifying the difference between his and Hume's concept of sympathy (Reeder, 1997: 13). In sum, Hume does not accept Smith's identification of sympathy with moral judgment. In spite of Hume's sarcastic tone, the difference is not of minor significance. Smith tries to replace not only Hume's theory of sympathy but his whole system (TMS 327). Smith classifies and criticises Hume's theory as a doctrine that seeks the principle of approval in utility. He thinks that the consideration of result can never be the ground of moral value. Smith fears that if morality depends on utility, actual praise will have priority over the praise-worthiness. He asserts that the idea of morality being based

on utility is a mere "afterthought, and not what first recommends them to our approbation" (TMS 20).[181] Smith further criticises Hume.[182]

> That system which places virtue in utility, coincides too with that which makes it consist in propriety. According to this system, all those qualities of the mind which are agreeable or advantageous, either to the person himself or to others, are approved of as virtuous, and the contrary disapproved of as vicious. But the agreeableness or utility of any affection depends upon the degree which it is allowed to subsist in. Every affection is useful when it is confined to a certain degree of moderation; and every affection is disadvantageous when it exceeds the proper bounds. According to this system therefore, virtue consists not in any one affection, but in the proper degree of all the affections. The only difference between it and that which I have been endeavouring to establish, is, that it makes utility, and not sympathy, or the correspondent affection of the spectator, the natural and original measure of this proper degree. (TMS 306)

But Smith's understanding of Hume needs correction.[183] Smith's criticism would be correct only if Hume identified sympathy with moral sentiments. For Hume, however, sympathy is a means to obtain those perceptions before the agent is ready to make a moral judgement. But the real thrust of this disagreement concerns the relationship between the good and the right. Hume's sympathy assumes the priority of the good over the "right", which is contrary to the case in Smith. If moral judgement is, as Smith claims, only concerned with the propriety of sentiments, its role is to tell if something is right or wrong.

Hume explains by his theory of sympathy how it is possible that people can share the sentiments of other people even if they do not experience the same situation

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[181] This reveals a very significant characteristic of Smith's idea, as it relates to his notion of providence. Smith thinks that utility is to be realised by right action.

[182] Raynor convincingly offers a very interesting story about how Smith tries to buy the favour of the general readers by attacking Hume, and by appealing to his orthodox faith, while Hume tries to procure Smith a good reputation by publishing the anonymous "Abstract" of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* in which he deliberately denigrates his own theory in Smith's favour (Raynor, 1984). Also, Raphael argues the reason Smith withdrew the paragraph endorsing the Christian doctrine of atonement is because he felt some revulsion criticising Hume by using language of those "who had been the bitterest detractors of Hume (Raphael, 1969: 225-48).

in person. In this way, Hume's sympathy is a means of communication, and explains the mechanism by which people share the perception of moral situations before making moral judgements. The most important feature of Hume's sympathy is the intervention of the third object, as either property or action, between the self and others, as the direct object of perception. Smith's sympathy is also meant to be a medium for communication, but Smith's communication, as it is a direct comparison between two sentiments, obtains only in cases where people approve of others, which is too narrow to cover the entire range of human communication. Smith does not explain how it is possible for a spectator to recognise a moral situation in the first place.[184] Smith takes it for granted that the spectator and the agent can share the recognition of moral object. This is because Smith' theory of sympathy is a normative theory, unlike Hume's theory that is an epistemology for explaining objective perception.

4. General Point of View and Impartial Spectator

In his pursuit of justification of moral judgement, Smith criticised utility as the standard of morals, and seeks to the standard in the idealised judgement of impartial spectator. The grave consequence is that Smith separated the ground of justification of moral action from its effects in reality; moral actions are good regardless of its causal effects in so far as an impartial spectator approves it. His separation of "the efficient cause from final cause" (TMS 87), and the reliance on the latter correspond to this picture.[185] At this point, Smith decisively resorts to providence to compensate for the right determination; right action will cause good effect in the end by providence (cf. TMS 128-30, 166). The notion of providence resolves the problem of

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[183] Raynor argues that Smith's reply completely misses the point of Hume's criticism (Raynor, 1984: 57).

[184] Smith distinguishes moral recognition from moral approval. But this in fact makes moral sentiments redundant for moral recognition, because any objective recognition of a moral situation should correspond to one moral judgement.

[185] Kleer also criticises the view that theological concepts "may be excised without impairing the cogency of Smith's analysis (Kleer, 1995: 275)", and shows that "the principle of a benevolent divine author of nature must be considered as one of the cornerstones of Smith's system of moral philosophy (Kleer, 1995: 279)". Smith uses "God" or "Gods" at lease sixty six times in TMS. Many commentators, however, are opposed to this picture (e.g., Haakonssen, 1981: 77-9).

the correspondence between sentiment and reality, or sympathy and social order. Unlike Hume, Smith does not supply an explanation why the sympathy of the impartial spectator represents the stable relationship among numerous people (Herdt, 1997: 50-60; Haakonssen, 1988: 97-110, 1996: Ch. 2).[186] Smith's moral theory focuses on the justification of moral determination whose consequences are not taken into account. Smith confines the moral authority ultimately to the conscience of each individual. However, this causes a problem; if conscience is the ultimate authority, there will be no way to arbitrate opposing consciences between individuals.

On the other hand, Hume finds the origin of justice not in the conscience but in the relationship among individuals which is represented by custom. Hume is able to avoid the Smithean problematic of how the impartial spectator can know the mind of a moral agent by setting the starting point in perceptions that belong both to self and others. In Hume, moral order is fundamentally reduced to stabilising human relationships. Hume attempts to explain the goodness of moral action as a good effect. Sympathy is necessary to achieve shared perceptions of moral situations rather than moral judgements.

It is necessary to recognise the difference between Hume's general point of view and Smith's impartial spectator. A general point of view is distinct from the impartial judgement of a spectator. Views can be held by anyone, but to have an impartial spectator's judgement, one needs to become an impartial spectator. It is noteworthy that Smith called the viewpoint of the impartial spectator, "a third place" (Smith 1984, p.135). Hume's general point of view, on the other hand, is not occupied by specific persons, but represents the situation itself. It is general as opposed to particular, and therefore enables people to reach agreement on the meaning of a moral situation. Unlike Smith's notion of the impartial spectator who sees "all", Hume's general point of view provides a view to see things in their general quality. Sentiments of sympathy obtained from the general point of view assume a generality in the sense that they are in principle accessible to people in general. They do not primarily depend on a particular faculty of the observer.

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[186] Clark says that unlike Hume, Smith's adherence to natural law theory and his reliance on final cause has prevented him from developing a theory based on efficient cause (Clark, 1994: 151-68).

Because of this, Hume's theory explains the creation of society. Smith's moral theory aims at producing moral persons, while Hume's target is to explain the nature of morality itself.

The most significant difference between the Humean and the Smithean concepts of sympathy is concerned with justice. While Hume separates the emergence of justice from the natural working of sympathy, Smith identifies justice with the sympathy of impartial spectator as fairness. For Hume justice purports to create order by coordinating people's self-interests. Therefore, it comes to be crystallised as a private law in the first instance. For Smith, justice is to preserve the social order; therefore, it is centred on commutative justice (cf. Griswold, 1999: 252).

5. Concluding Remarks

It is clear that Smith's conscience is an internalisation of social convention. In fact, Smith's impartial spectator is given the role as the representative of society, and embodiment of the values of society. This is why the impartial spectator is compared to a higher tribunal, where normativity is established, as Smith's sympathy is founded on the private conviction. But Hume's general point of view is open to external views, and more prepared to produce normativity in accordance with the development of custom. Hume's general point of view is externalised in constructing a moral world. In this way, Hume's general point of view and Smith's impartial spectator represent opposite directions of understanding normativity.

Chapter Six:

The Epistemological Foundation of Justice in Hobbes and Locke

Introduction

The formation of a political society is the central topic in the theories of Hobbes, Locke, and Hume. They all share the fundamental view that society is sustained by the system of justice, which prescribes a stable relationship among its members. However, they have different objectives for presenting their theories of justice. Hobbes tries to provide justification for the necessity of obeying the sovereign, whereas Locke tries to protect the right of individuals from political oppression, and Hume tries to provide an explanation compatible with an emerging industrial and commercial civil society. Accordingly, they have different definitions of justice. For Hobbes, justice is the will of the sovereign; for Locke, it is the eternal law of nature; and for Hume, it is an established convention of society. My claim in this chapter is that their respective theories of justice correspond to their epistemologies. Hobbes, Locke and Hume all are commonly influenced by the Baconian nominalism that denies the reality of the universal. In defining their theories of justice, the concept of the universal is a key issue; society relates to the individual, as the universal relates to the particular. Thus, they need to provide an explanation of the particulars which function as quasi-universals to unite society. Hobbes's theory reflects his materialistic nominalism, and Locke's theory reflects his conceptualism.

The differences in their epistemologies consist in the difference in "the point of view" from which justice appears. Hobbes's concept of justice is founded on the first person perspective of the sovereign. Locke's theory of justice can be construed as based on the objective perspective which can be found in natural law that is God's eternal law.

This transitional chapter examines the theories of justice found in Hobbes and Locke, as a necessary background for explaining Hume's theory of justice in the

next chapter. In section 1, I indicate the connection between Hobbes's nominalism and his theory of the absolute authority of sovereign, by showing how one's recognition of the equality of perspective with others produces morality. In section 2, I show how Locke's conceptualism relates to his theory of government by majority rule. I argue that Locke's morality is founded on a rationalist perspective.

1. Hobbes's Morality of the First Person Perspective

Hobbes begins his argument by elucidating the human nature that is common to all human beings regardless of the differences in their religious or moral viewpoints. Under the influence of Grotius, Hobbes remains thoroughly faithful to this principle when he describes human nature and the state of nature that reflects it. As a methodological individualist, he carefully leaves out all aspects of human beings that have any bearing upon morality as a means for making a peaceful relationship with other people. This methodology not only clarifies the obstacles to establishing a society in which people can have industry and long life, but it also makes people realise the absolute necessity of avoiding such obstacles. According to Hobbes, the most serious obstacle and threat to civil society is man's unrestricted desire in his pursuit of self-preservation and the power to assure it. Hobbes's objective is to define the structure of a civil society that is the product of the converted wills of the people. He theorizes that the prescriptions that stipulate the solution of this problem can be called a natural law which is a means to escape from the state of nature. According to Hobbes, natural law is publicly interpreted as the will of the sovereign who has absolute authority in a civil society. In this way, Hobbes transforms natural law into an empirical concept (cf. Herdt, 1997: Ch. 1).

Hobbes's theory is usually considered an interest-based moral theory.[187] According to this interpretation, people make a bargain with each other in a manner that promotes their common interests. Although this kind of egoistic-theory

[187] Thomas Nagel says that "I shall attempt to show that genuine moral obligation plays no part in *Leviathan* at all, but that what Hobbes calls moral obligation is based exclusively on considerations of rational self-interest ... One cannot miss the arguments in *Leviathan* based on self-interest. An egoistic theory of motivation permeates the entire book" (Nagel, 1959: 69).

interpretation of Hobbes may be interesting as an ethical theory, it is not a correct reading of Hobbes and fails to appreciate the essence of his argument.

Indisputably, Hobbes's theory rests on methodological individualism. In the introduction to his *Leviathan*, Hobbes acknowledges "*Read thy self*" (*Leviathan* 10) as a cliché of his doctrine. Hobbes's individualism reflects his ontological position of mechanical materialism, and his epistemological position of nominalism. From the premise of individualism, Hobbes argues for the necessity for morality to prescribe a compatibility of independent individuals. Morality is that which differentiates a society from a mere gathering of atomic individuals. Therefore, morality is presented as the fundamental condition of commonwealth. Hobbes describes the creation of the commonwealth as the realisation of morality itself.

Let us briefly survey Hobbes's epistemological framework. According to Hobbes, every idea is derived from sensations that are a result of "motions of the matter" (*Leviathan* 14). Motion of volition, *conatus* or "Endeavour", is called "Desire" when it promotes life, "Aversion" when it prevents life. Objects of desire or of aversion are identified as "Good" or "Evill" (*Leviathan* 38). As our understanding is a product of our sensation and imagination, our understanding of good and evil is also individual. This idea is endorsed by his nominalism. Hobbes expresses his view on the idea of the universal as follows:

> Of names, some are *Proper*, and singular to one onely thing; as *Peter, John, This man, this Tree*: and some are *Common* to many things; as *Man, Horse, Tree*; every of which though but one Name, is nevertheless the name of divers particular things; in respect of all which together, it is called a *Universall*; there being nothing in the world Universall but Names; for the things named, are every one of them Individuall and Singular.
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> One Universall name is imposed on many things, for their similitude in some quality, or other accident: And wheras a Proper Name bringeth to mind one thing only; Universals recall any one of those many. (*Leviathan* 26)

Hobbes is clearly aware of his position as a nominalist. His treatment of the "universal name" is noteworthy; a universal name does not refer to one universal

thing, but to many things that are similar, and recalls any one of them. There is a notable similarity between this and the Humean theory of general ideas. Unlike Hume, however, Hobbes does not develop a theory about how the "similitude" functions, and emphasises only that there is no universal concept, since his intention is to provide a mechanical explanation of the role which "Speech" (*Leviathan*, Ch. 4) plays in human behaviour. Most importantly, Hobbes's nominalism leads to the denial of the existence of a universal moral law. As each individual has a particular position, a good thing for one person does not mean the same for another. Thus, literally there is no "common good" as the foundation of "Commonwealth".[188]

He describes, by way of introspection, the natural working of human psychology to seek self-preservation. Hobbes's state of nature is a hypothesis obtained from thought experiments, which depicts a counter-reality that would emerge were it not for the existence of political society. Where there is no law, people must rely upon individual decisions to secure their self-preservation. In the state of nature, where only natural rights dominate, one is responsible for one's own life. All things are evaluated solely in terms of its particular relation to one's own self-interest. In other words, everything is to be evaluated by its direct serviceability to one's self-preservation. And as self-preservation is a unique interest peculiar to individuals, the survival value of things is incompatible between different people; if one person obtains something desirable, it works disadvantageously for others. Therefore, the understanding of the good and the bad inevitably differs from person to person.

Hobbes understands that "power" is most important for self-preservation. He defines power as the "present means, to obtain some future apparent Good" (*Leviathan* 62). With limited resources, other people, as one's equal competitors seeking the same things, appear from any one individual's particular point of view as obstacles to one's own survival. The only way to remove the menace of others is to

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[188] In contrast to this, Locke's fundamental tenet in common with Grotius and Pufendorf is that men live in a world that is a gift given "to Mankind in common" (*Two Treaties* 286). This is a criticism of Filmer's divine right theory that God had given the earth to Adam and his heirs in succession (e.g. Olivercorona, 1974: 220-34). Thus, Yolton maintains that Locke's problem is to explain "how particularisation is possible" (Yolton, 1970: 187).

show one's competitors one's superiority so as to obtain the best prospect of survival. Therefore, people seek for "Honour", "Worth", and "Dignity" as a sign of their supremacy (*Leviathan*, Ch. 10). Their common ultimate desire is to preserve their own lives. For that purpose, they are allowed, by their natural rights, to do anything to secure everything they may need in the future. Based on these assumptions, the inevitable course that multitudes of such people follow is a "Warre of every one against every one" (*Leviathan* 88). Here "Warre" refers not to any actual fight; but to a state in which people cannot live in peace; people are destined to compete with all other people, which is impossible because of their physical restraints as human beings. It is obvious to every one, however, that war with everyone is the worst situation as there can be no final winner. In this situation, people find a contradiction between their initial intention and the final result; they only wish to secure their own lives, but as a result, they are not merely frustrated in their desire, but inevitably aquire a most miserable life which is "solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short" (*Leviathan* 89).

It is important that people plunge into war not because they are naturally brutal or morally wicked. If this would be true, there would be no possibility of attaining peace, for it would be impossible to change human nature. War in the Hobbesian state of nature is a matter of human rationality and not a moral problem. People use rationality not for obtaining maximum utility, but for securing a minimum level of self-preservation.[189] It requires but a little reflection for anyone to see that the fundamental cause of war is the fact that other people also have natural rights, that is "the Liberty each man hath, to use his own power, as he will himself, for the preservation of his own Nature" (*Leviathan* 91). Although liberty is by definition beyond the control of others, it is to be presumed that people are rational with respect to fulfilling their own objectives. Therefore, to be more exact, the real problem is not liberty itself, but the lack of a common rule for making the liberty of different people compatible. In other words, there is no common means for people to achieve peaceful relations with others while securing their individual interests. War derives from the absence of this mutuality, which is a due consequence of the premise of

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[189] An Epicurean influence is easily traceable in Hobbes.

methodological individualism. However, as people's concerted desire is to escape from war, it is a matter of rationality, and not of morality, to desire peace and to avoid war. In this way, the first law of nature reads as follows:

> That every man, ought to endeavour Peace, as farre as he has hope of obtaining it; and when he cannot obtain it, that he may seek, and use, all helps, and advantages of Warre. (*Leviathan* 92)

Self-preservation is still the ultimate objective.[190] But as its direct pursuit proves to be ineffective, people must attain their objective through this indirect means with the understanding that what secures their survival is not power but peace.[191] The next problem concerns the manner to attain peace. The key lies in understanding the cause of peace. On the one hand, everyone desires the same goal, peace, and everyone has the same obstacle: the liberty of others. On the other hand, although the liberty of others is beyond control, they have control over their own liberty as their natural right. Paradoxically, the wills of others are uncontrollable because everyone has control over his own will. A crucial element to solving the problem of peace and war lies in the fact that everyone fears others.[192] Here, let us confirm who the "others" are. "Others" do not signify concrete individuals; rather it is a "Common Name", which is relational to the self. It is to be noted that in Hobbes's individualist perspective, all people are only first-person individuals. In fact, all individuals are "others" to each other. Therefore, all fear themselves as seen from the viewpoint of others. In Hobbes, moral relationships with others are reduced to the relationship with oneself.

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[190] Therefore, unlike Spinoza's criticism, Hobbesian people do not in fact renounce all their natural rights.

[191] Locke also maintains the importance of quitting the direct pursuit of desire. He proposes the "*suspension*" of desire as the central characteristic of human freedom (cf. *Essay*, 2.21.47). According to Locke, Human beings should suspend their direct desire in order for reason to make a moral judgement. The problem is how one can tell whether or not one has suspended desire, or whether the judgement is made by reason. This is the same problem that is found in his theory of producing abstract ideas; in order to suspend the desire and attain the moral judgment, the right judgement has to be clear beforehand. Locke's "voluntarism" matches his explanation, in which reason can tell whether the judgement agrees or disagrees with the divine will.

It is crucial for people to notice that the instrument for turning from war to peace consists in the awareness that other people have the same fear of oneself that one has of others. Though it is impossible to have others under control, it is possible to attain the same effect by putting oneself in the place of others. This is the solution. In order therefore to remove fear, people have only to cease to be a source of fear for others. Hobbes for the first time clarifies that morality is concerned with a change in point of view. This is the Hobbesian creation of mutuality by rationality in the first person perspective.[193] Therefore the second law of nature runs as follows.

> That a man be willing, when others are so too, as farre-forth, as for Peace, and defence of himself he shall think it necessary, to lay down this right to all things; and be contented with so much liberty against other men, as he would allow other men against himself. (*Leviathan* 92)

Here emerges the prescription for peace based on mutuality: everyone should renounce his freedom on the condition that others do the same. In other words, only by seeing oneself as one sees other people can a person obtain peace in return. The crucial step for being moral is to acquire the point of view of seeing oneself from the point of view of others. This is feasible by seeing oneself as one sees others. This is the Hobbesian exegesis of "*Read thy self*". The Hobbesian way of transcending the individual perspective is not precisely to exchange positions with others, because that is prohibited by the premise of methodological individualism.[194] It is done rather only through introspection. In this way, the mutuality that people do not possess in the state of nature emerges. Mutuality in Hobbes does not mean to act directly upon other people; it involves merely a change of one's own perspective. Mutuality is to regard others as one's equal. By this means, others cease to be a mere obstacle for attaining one's self-preservation. This signifies the transition from

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[192] Richard Tuck proposes an interesting thesis that the fundamental purpose of Hobbes's theory is to liberate men from unnecessary fear (Tuck, 1991).
[193] This is to be contrasted with the Humean creation of mutuality by sympathy.
[194] Unlike Adam Smith's theory of sympathy, in which the exchange of positions is modelled on the impartial spectator's approval, the Hobbesian exchange of positions is based on the understanding of oneself.

natural to moral recognition of others. At this stage, equality as a natural fact turns into a moral norm.

After stating nineteen entities of the laws of nature, Hobbes indicates a rule by which the laws of nature may easily be examined; "Do not that to another, which thou wouldest not have done to thy self" (*Leviathan* 109). This is a modification of the golden rule in the Gospel: "love your neighbour as yourself".[195] The modification is necessary for applying the rule beyond the physical limitation of human beings, and only through this unspecified relationship can people contract a relationship with other people in general.[196] Hobbes says that the laws of nature are "easie", because "they require nothing but endeavour; he that endeavoureth their performance, fulfilleth them; and he that fulfilleth the Law, is Just" (*Leviathan* 110). Hobbes describes it as "easie", because the relationship with others is realised through a relationship with oneself. Hobbesian morality is a rational activity, and it does not rely upon custom. This is the Hobbesian ground for making a covenant. People need a guarantee that this covenant is observed by others, for it is clear if this is left to the good wishes of other people, the system will soon collapse. And the guarantee must be a compulsory power. Thus, people make a covenant and enter under the rule of their common sovereign.

Hobbes's moral philosophy is concerned with how to make the multiple wills of individuals compatible. A covenant is the direct means for that purpose. What distinguishes the civil state from the natural state is the fact that people submit themselves, regardless of their personal judgement, to the order of the sovereign, which then emerges as a law. The idea of the Hobbesian covenant demands once and for all an alternative between liberty without life and life without liberty. As self-preservation is the clear and ultimate goal of the covenant, the decision for life without liberty always prevails. Also for this reason, there is no escape from morality; denial of morality is tantamount to a denial of one's life. This can be regarded as a justification of society in his covenant theory. In this way, the Hobbesian hypothesis of the state of nature shows a theoretical necessity of entering

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[195] George Shelton indicates the relationship between Hobbesian morality and the golden rule (cf. Shelton, 1992: Ch. 4).

into a covenant. Fortunately, on accepting life within that order, people can enjoy civil liberty. Admittedly, the absolute authority appears as an object of fear. But the fear of the sovereign is different from the fear of others in the state of nature since that is a guarantee of inevitable death. Furthermore, the more the sovereign is feared, the more likely one's life is safe from breach of the law by others, since fear prevents people from breaching law. Thus *my* fear of the sovereign is the source of security from the perspective of others. Without this enforcement, civil society is no better that the state of nature where people are isolated and act according to their individual interests. On the other hand, whenever the law "silences", which in fact applies to most human activities, people can enjoy their natural liberty.[197] In this sense, the enhancement of liberty is the final product of commonwealth without aiming at it.

There is another reason why political authority is necessary, apart from being a moral constraint. The political authority finalises the disputes regarding the interpretation of the natural law among its subjects. Law does not consist in abstract words, but in its concrete application, because law without application is non-existent. In the state of nature, the absence of political authority is the direct cause of war. Hobbes maintains that judgement must be made by a single will. This is because a single will does not contain contradiction. It is impossible from the perspective of the individual to decide which of their competing convictions should prevail especially when property ownership is at stake. This is not because individuals are avaricious, but because their view is particular and not comprehensive enough. Therefore, the only publicly recognisable decision derives from the sovereign.

A key implication of this idea is that property ownership must be decided singly. A decision by the sovereign, by virtue of being a single and accessible order, is bound to bring the most coherent settlings of property ownership. This is the reason Hobbes strongly adheres to the indivisibility of the sovereign. The whole task of the subjects is to submit themselves to that particular order. When the will of the sovereign is different from the natural will of the individuals, it is their duty as

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[196] In this respect, Hume's sympathy still preserves the positive application of the golden rule.
[197] In fact, this is the realm of custom. Hobbes strategically stays away from this realm and deals with the conscious or positive aspect of human activity.

subjects to regard it as their real will. This is the Hobbesian explanation of the duty of obedience to government.

2. Locke's Morality: a Rational Perspective

Lockean moral and political philosophy is characterised as "rights-based". The purpose of Locke's political philosophy is to defend the rights of people from the arbitrary power of government; government is established to protect the inalienable rights of the people, especially their life, freedom, and property. Here is already a remarkable difference from Hobbesian theory, where self-preservation is the ultimate desire of human beings. In Hobbes, people cannot secure their life in the state of nature, because they cannot become a property owner in the state of nature. Ownership involves a moral relationship that is beyond merely physical control. Unlike Hobbes, Locke's people own their property from the beginning. Therefore, Locke's ultimate objective is to preserve not their life but their ownership of their property that is entitled to every man already in the state of nature (cf. *Two Treatises* 272). The mere preservation of life is not enough, because without the ownership, their life is not their own. The crucial difference that separates Hobbes from Locke reflects the difference in their epistemology. As we saw in the previous section, Hobbesian nominalism is a mechanical explanation. Knowledge is produced as a reaction to an external object, and thus it is particular. Hobbes applies the same mechanical explanation throughout his work to all kinds of knowledge, physical, human, and political.

Locke can be regarded as a conceptualist whose position is typically expressed in his theory of abstraction. Conceptualism depends on the faculty of reason and understanding; though the materials of knowledge are external objects that produce ideas in human minds, human beings have a unique capacity of abstraction, and produce "abstract Ideas" that have a universal cognitive content. Locke explains how general words come to be made as follows:

> Words become general, by being made the signs of general *Ideas*: and *Ideas* become general, by separating from them the

> circumstances of Time, and Place, and any other *Ideas*, that may determine them to this or that particular Existence. By this way of abstraction they are made capable of representing more Individuals than one; each of which, having in it a conformity to that abstract *Idea*, is (as we call it) of that sort. (*Essay* 3.3.6)

Locke distinguishes between real essence and nominal essence. The real essence is what is inherent in objects, and the nominal essence is the universality of complex ideas that human understanding creates out of particular perceptions. In the case of external objects, the two are not congruent. In the case of morality, however, they are identical because morality is concerned with no external object, but consists in relation of ideas, and the materials of moral considerations are complex ideas that are themselves the product of reason (*Essay* 4.3.19). Complex ideas are comprised of ideas of substance, mode, and relation. Locke considers that morality is a matter of mixed modes (*Essay* 2.22.10,12) and relations, of which cause and effect is an example (*Essay* 2.26.2). Modes of human action and the causal relation of human action can be understood by reason. Therefore, Locke thinks that "*Morality is capable of Demonstration*" (*Essay* 4.12.8). The laws of nature as the paradigm of Lockean morality are considered to be discoverable by experiences and reason.[198]

It is especially noteworthy that the Lockean theory is centred on *reason* and freedom, which individuals are equipped with in the state of nature, and which are necessary in order to deal with their properties. This explains the individual as property possessor in his *Two Treatises of Government.* Although the target of Locke's criticism in his political theory is usually considered the divine right theory (Laslett, 1986: introduction; Snyder, 1986: 723-50), he is clearly conscious of the Hobbesian theory of the state of nature. Locke's definition of the state of nature already shows a stark contrast with Hobbes's. Locke describes the state of nature as follows:

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[198] This is the background of Locke's understanding of the state of nature (cf. Yolton, 1970, Chs. 7, 8).

> a *State of perfect Freedom* to order their actions, and dispose of their Possessions, and Persons as they think fit, within the bounds of the Law of Nature, without asking leave , or depending upon the Will of any other Man.
>
> A *State* also *of Equality*, wherein all the Power and Jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one leaving more than another: there being nothing more evident, than that Creatures of the same species and rank promiscuously born to all the same advantages of Nature, and the use of the same faculties, should also be equal one amongst another without Subordination or Subjection. (*Two Treatises* 269)

It is noteworthy that Locke describes the state of nature as "a State of perfect Freedom" where Hobbes calls it a state of war. Which cognitive faculty can describe freedom as "perfect"? It is impossible to call freedom perfect from the individualist perspective, because freedom can never be secured in the Hobbesian state of nature. Therefore, Locke sees the situation from a different perspective from Hobbes; that is, the perspective which sees things rationally or objectively by the faculty of reason. And this perspective is impossible for Hobbes because of his nominalistic framework. As we have seen above, Lockean conceptualism underlies this objective perspective, and is founded on the faculty of reason that produces abstract ideas.

In the Lockean state of nature, people are free, equal and possessors of their properties, including, in particular, their own body. Because human beings are free, rational and capable of creating abstract ideas, they can be possessors of properties already in the state of nature. Therefore, the Lockean man does not only have a duty "to preserve himself", but also ought "as much as he can, to preserve the rest of Mankind" (*Two Treatises* 271). Through the protection and respect of his life, the Lockean man conceives the order that harmonises the property relationship among people. Property is not a natural fact, but is protected by the binding force of morality.

Mutuality is realised by people's rational capacity of following the law of nature. In the state of nature, Lockean individuals, as independent proprietors, are reciprocal from the beginning. The law of nature, represented in the Gospel, orders them to treat others as their equals. Based on their common moral capacity, a more

positive form of mutual relationship is artificially created by a social contract. Society is established through the law of nature, that is, by submitting oneself to the rule of the majority. Locke's rational morality does not rely upon mutuality, but only guarantees it. Moral right, by its own right, is supposed to bring harmony into human relationships.

Locke criticises the Hobbesian identification of the state of nature with war. Locke thinks that war can happen even when man is in a social state. Human beings have a natural right to live, because God could not have created human beings in vain. Although Hobbes considers self-preservation a natural fact, for Locke, self-preservation is a moral duty.[199] And because human beings are created in God's image and endowed with reason to judge right from wrong, they can live in peace without external instruction and even without government.

Therefore, government is not absolutely necessary for Lockean theory because there is the rule of natural law prior to any human institution. The desirability of government in Locke comes from a different ground from Hobbes. For Hobbes, government is necessary to produce property ownership which secures people's lives. However, Locke thinks it possible to determine property ownership without government. Locke asserts,

> Though the Earth, and all inferior Creatures be common to all Men, yet every Man has a *Property* in his own *Person*. This no Body has any Right to but himself. The *Labour* of his Body, and the *Work* of his Hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever then he removes out of the State that Nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his *Labour* with, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his *Property*. (*Two Treatises* 287-288)

The natural law that determines property is called the labour theory of value; everyone is the owner of his body, so any product that is created with his labour is his property due to natural law (cf. Snyder, 1986: 723-50). Locke maintains that it is

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[199] Unlike the negative rule in Hobbes, the Locke adopts the rule in the positive form, presumably because the rational law of nature realises the order of the whole (cf. Harris, 2000: 49-85).

a "Law of reason" (*Two Treatises* 289) that should be clear to any person who is capable of reasoning. However, with the invention of money as a conventional means for storing property, instability begins to make the society more vulnerable to a breach of the moral order. This is because of the imperfections of human beings. There are three artifices to compensate the weakness of human beings: the legislative, the executive, and the federative power. These compose a government. Locke asserts that there is only one way for individuals to enter into a political society provided they are "free, equal and independent (*Two Treatises* 330)". This way is via their consent to follow the majority, rather than the sovereign.

> When any number of Men have so *consented to make one Community* or Government, they are thereby presently incorporated, and make *one Body Politics*, wherein the *Majority* have a Right to act and conclude the rest. (*Two Treatises* 331)

People establish a government by a bilateral contract; they consent to submit to the rule of government, and the government gives protection to their life and property in return. The power of government is "a delegated power from the People" (*Two Treatises* 362) and therefore, based on "Trust" (*Two Treatises* 413). Locke stipulates "the *Right of resisting*" (*Two Treatises* 404) when "The *Legislative acts against the Trust* reposed in them, when they endeavour to invade the Property of the Subject" (*Two Treatises* 412). Locke has little worry about the moral legitimacy of the right to resist, because he expects it to have preventative effects. Locke trusts the moral capacity of the people that they will not exert the right to resist without good cause.

Locke's description of the state of nature and his idea of the natural right of all human beings reflect his epistemological framework. As a conceptualist, he admits the creation of universal understanding by reason. In Locke, fundamental social order need not be created artificially. In other words, moral order is not any creation of mutual relationships. On the contrary, the rational moral law should regulate mutual relationships between people. In this sense, Locke's moral theory can be regarded as constructed from the rational point of view. Locke has no doubt

about human beings' moral capacity as they are created in the image of God. This is in contrast to Hobbes's picture of human beings as fallen sinners. In Locke, the protection of freedom is important, because without freedom one's life is not his own property. Locke considers that all human beings are equal by their moral capacity. This is the moral idea of equality that is recognisable by human reason, and the central task of people is to implement it. A political authority is needed specifically for that purpose.

Instead of the Hobbesian will of the sovereign, the Lockean criterion of political authority is expressed by the "determination of the *majority*" (*Two Treatises* 331) that endorses the majority rule.[200] This difference also stems from the moral status of popular opinion in their theories. For Locke the consent of the majority is first justified by presupposing the moral equality of each person; because they are equal, the majority vote is justified as the only way to settle a dispute.[201] In order for the consent of the majority to be regarded as appropriate, the majority must always make a proper determination. Hobbes would decline this idea, for every human being has a particular interest, and no particular interest is compatible with other particular interests. Though Hobbes is apparently aware of the idea of determination by the majority, the consent of the majority is not the principal means for discovering morality.[202] Therefore, he is careful not to make it conspicuous as he indicates that people "may reduce all their Wills, by plurality of voices, upon one Assembly of men" (*Leviathan* 120). Compared to this idea, Locke's reliance on people's opinion leads to "The *Law of Opinion or Reputation*" (cf. *Essay* 2.28.10). Popular opinion can be reliable as moral criterion in so far as people exert their reason properly.

That Locke sets property as the cornerstone of his moral theory furnishes his theory with a rational character, because property is thought to have an obvious external existence, which literally means an object of rational recognition. Property is considered a quality of a person. As his theory of external existence shows,

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[200] Although the majority vote has a function for selecting the sovereign in Hobbes, it does not have the same significance as in Locke.
[201] Therefore, as an individual, people retain a right to leave the society.
[202] In the similar line of thought, Hobbes declines the Aristotelian idea of "mean", as it has nothing to do with the truth.

recognition of property is analogous to the recognition of qualities.[203] Objectivity is the realm of reason. Locke's basic premise about qualities endorses the fixation of property by a rational agency. Also in this sense, Locke's social contract theory is based on the objective perspective of reason. But the problem still remains regarding whether or not reason is capable of recognising property and moral order. This is the point Hume explored closely in his critical examination of the Lockean theory. Hence Hume's moral theory begins with the examination of perception and knowledge.

3. Concluding Remarks

So far, we have considered the theory of justice in Hobbes, and Locke in reference to their epistemology. It has been argued that their epistemology characterises the theoretical framework of justice. Hobbes clarifies not only the necessary course of the behaviour of atomic individuals in the state of nature, which leads to the war with everyone, but also the necessity of having morality for creating stable relationships. The crucial turn from the state of nature to a social state is produced by the recognition of the equality between oneself and others, i.e. by obtaining the point of view of seeing oneself as one sees others. Hobbesian mutuality is attained only through a change of relationship with oneself, without property relationship. This is why Hobbes emphasises the necessity of establishing political order itself.

Lockean mutuality is based on rationality. As a conceptualist, Locke believes in a universal order recognisable by reason. He thinks that by rational consideration one can maintain a peaceful relation with others regarding personal properties. Locke's theory aims at securing the rights of citizens against government. Lockean theory clarifies the political obligation of the government. Locke ascribes the status of moral agency to people, thus he overturns Hobbesian priorities in terms of morality between the state and the people. Locke's advancement from Hobbes consists in recognising the significance of free economic activities, symbolised by property, over and above mere political order.

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[203] As with Hume, the Lockean theory of external objects anticipates his moral theory.

It is significant to recognise that the two philosophical systems shed light on morality from different "perspectives". Hobbesian theory shows that creating and sustaining peaceful relationships with others is the supreme objective of morality and we should almost always obey the moral order. His moral theory is characterised as proceeding from an individual perspective. Lockean theory is oriented towards individual rights: to freedom and property. His theory is characterised as a perspective of reason.

In Chapter 7 we will consider Hume's theory of justice in relation to his epistemology to see how Hume revised the Hobbesian and the Lockean theories of justice through his epistemology based on custom that is characterised by the concept of the general point of view.

Chapter Seven:

Justice and the Stability of Property

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed the relationship between epistemology and justice in Hobbes and Locke. It has been shown that their understanding of the universal determines their theory of political authority. What is at issue is how to explain the principle of the society that unites individuals. The principle is assumed to function as a quasi-universal in that it is beyond the single will of individuals.

Hobbes regards the will of the sovereign as the only possible substitute of the universal that binds individuals. Therefore, the will of the sovereign represents justice. Locke denied the idea of Hobbesian justice and asserts that the will of the people represents justice. Locke's theory reflects his conceptualism; the discovery of reason represents the universal. This difference between Hobbes and Locke corresponds to their different picture of human beings. Hobbes's picture of human beings is fundamentally hedonistic, while Locke views human beings as rational. However, Hobbes and Locke share the assumption of individualism.

Hume directs his fundamental criticism to their individualism. Hume attempts to replace their theory by proposing custom as the template of justice. Custom has been the constant theme throughout the whole of the *Treatise*. This is true also in the theory of justice. Most important of all, making custom the basis of justice illuminates Hume's unique way of realising mutuality. On the one hand, Hobbes's idea of mutuality is realised by the exchange of positions with others, i.e. by seeing oneself as one sees others. It is important to note that this is different from the Smithean exchange of positions that allows people to see themselves from the point of view of others, which should be impossible in Hobbesian individualism. On the other hand, Lockean mutuality is attained by obeying the prescriptions of the Natural Law. Lockean mutuality is founded on a rational perspective. Hume rejects both

theories as untrue to human nature, and founded mutuality on convention. Mutuality enables the pursuit of self-interests in a cooperative manner. And with the introductions of justice into society, the significance of self-interest changes. The fundamental characteristic of Humean justice lies in showing the unity of society, interest, and morality. I attempt to argue that Hume's general point of view is the unifying concept behind those three concepts.

In section 1, I argue that justice appears as a cause that regulates human behaviour. Justice is artificial because it is a product of convention and is not found in nature. In section 2, I argue that Hume founded the necessity of justice on the natural circumstances, both material and psychological, of human beings. This explains why Humean justice is an artificial "virtue" centring primarily on the relationship of "property". In section 3, I discuss why Humean justice realises society without resorting to any quasi-universals as the Hobbesian or the Lockean theories do. In section 4, I argue that Humean justice consists in the general point of view that realises human mutuality and cooperation. In section 5, I argue that, unlike the common allegation, the Humean theory of justice comprises a full-fledged theory of rights, and I show that Hume's dealings with "rights" have a parallelism with his dealings with the concept of "power". In section 6, I show that the rule for determining property is far from arbitrary, but is founded on his theory of human psychology as the principle of human nature. In section 7, I clarify the Humean ground for "why be just", or why we should abide by the rules of justice. This chapter clarifies that Hume's theory shows how public interest and private interest coincide in justice.

1. Justice as Artificial Virtue

The most striking characteristic of Hume's philosophy is that, whichever topic he discusses, Hume always sets his eyes on "causation". So it is with his discussion of the law of natural science, and so it is with his discussion of moral judgement. Those kinds of actions that cause pleasant sentiments in observers signify a virtuous character, and those that cause painful sentiments, a vicious one. Moral judgement has as its object the motivation of the agent as the cause of virtuous or vicious action.

Hume lays such emphasis on the motivation of an agent precisely because it causes human action. When Hume considers justice, he regards it as a kind of virtue in the sense that it is concerned with the evaluation of human behaviour.

Hume begins his discussion of justice by highlighting seemingly incomprehensible phenomena. From the general observation of virtuous actions, he observes that justice is characteristically performed without being directed at any good effect other than morality; justice seems to be performed for no other reason than that it is a duty. This is an enigma because all human behaviour is motivated by some good effects. Hume thinks that the most fundamental tenet of morality is the pleasant or painful effects of an action. Hume says,

> It appears, therefore, that all virtuous actions derive their merit only from virtuous motives, and are consider'd merely as signs of those motives. From this principle I conclude, that the first virtuous motive, which bestows a merit on any action, can never be a regard to the virtue of that action, but must be some other natural motive or principle. ... We blame a father for neglecting his child. Why? because it shews a want of natural affection, which is the duty of every parent. Were not natural affection a duty, the care of children cou'd not be a duty; and 'twere impossible we cou'd have the duty in our eye in the attention we give to our offspring. ...
>
> In short, it may be establish'd as an undoubted maxim, *that no action can be virtuous, or morally good, unless there be in human nature some motive to produce it, distinct from the sense of its morality* (T 3.2.1.4-7; SBN 478-9).

It is noteworthy that Hume clearly thinks that nature provides us with the paradigm of virtue. In other words, nature shows the example of moral behaviour by giving us motivation. Therefore, normativity accompanies natural motivation, which is why human beings have survived so far. This is a very radical transformation of the traditional theory of the natural law that resorts to reason for its prescription. Here is seen Hume's thesis of the priority of passion over reason as a moral paradigm.

If virtuous action should have some natural motive, but not all types of virtuous actions can be explained by natural motive, then it means there is a breach of the rule of nature. Just actions are to be performed regardless of our natural

tendencies and often in conflict with them. Therefore, the moral value of justice has apparently nothing to do with the direct effects of the action. Artificial virtue means that it does not originate directly from nature. It is significant to notice that Hume titles the first section of the chapter on justice "Justice, whether a natural or artificial virtue?" This in fact is an alternative between the Hobbesian and Lockean positions regarding this matter. And Hume clearly stands with Hobbes.

Hume demonstrates the artificiality of the virtue of justice by examining its three possible natural motivations: "private interest or reputation" (T 3.2.1.10; SBN 480), "the love of mankind" (T 3.2.1.12; SBN 481), and "*private benevolence, or a regard to the interests of the party concern'd*" (T 3.2.1.13; SBN 482). The first and the third of these are discarded for the similar reason that justice is often done in opposition to, not on behalf of, them. The second possibility is denied because there is no such thing as love of mankind. This indicates the evidence that Hume thinks about justice in reference to the psychological mechanism of human perception that is naturally influenced by one's close circle. As clarified in his theory of sympathy, human love as constituted of sentiments changes its strength in accordance with the psychological distance from the agent.

The artificiality of justice does not mean that justice is arbitrary, but that, as Hobbes argues, there is no such thing as justice in the state of nature. Obviously, civil society is not a state of nature, and therefore what distinguishes civil society from the state of nature has to be something artificial. An evolutionary explanation clarifies the nature and the significance of justice. Justice is a central concept for explaining the formation of society as a product of human development. This historical character of society necessitates a new principle that is not witnessed in natural relationships. As we have seen, sympathy is such a principle. But this does not mean that the artificiality of justice has nothing to do with natural principles. On the contrary, artificial virtue must be grafted on to the natural principle. Unlike Hobbes, Hume's theory of justice is an attempt to show this continuity.

Therefore, Hume's theory of justice explains the development of civil society as a product of human interaction. More specifically, it means that civil society has been formulated from the given natural conditions surrounding human

beings. The Humean state of nature comprises 1) individual human beings, 2) families as the primitive union of both sexes driven by natural instinct which subsequently results in reproduction, and 3) natural environments. Justice is the driving force which transforms a natural human group into a civil society. In other words, justice is the missing link between a natural human group and a civil society.

There is no doubt that people notice the advantages of human cooperation in their experiences in a family group. Human beings, therefore, desire society. However, there is a hindrance that prevents the family group from developing into a society. Hume is unequivocal about the specific cause that hinders the development of society from the family unit. It is, according to Hume, man's self interest which tends to focus on the interests of himself or his family members. Therefore, justice has to work as an opposing force to this natural interest. The artificiality of justice explains why Hume regards the virtue of justice in connection with duty. The apparent strictness of justice is reflected in the fact that justice is based on a different principle from natural virtue. The indifference to natural reactions explains an inflexible appearance to the artificial virtue of justice. In other words, Hume's virtue of justice does not include rigorousness as its essential characteristic, nor does it require absolute application.

On the other hand, the strict application of justice does not mean that justice corrects the selfishness of man.[204] First of all, the natural tendency of human nature cannot be corrected. And second, justice does not deny selfishness; instead, it liberates and, in a crucial sense, develops it. Hume clearly sees that the natural tendency of selfishness is not a vice, and there is no justice without "selfishness". This is another sense in which justice is not a matter of right or wrong, and selfishness is not wrong at all. It is important to remember that artificiality is only possible where human behaviour is freed from causal determination, or from an automatic response to the immediately preceding condition. In this respect, the artificiality of justice presupposes the development of human perceptions. Because of

[204] Charles Cottle maintains that the strict application of justice is to "correct the selfishness of man as he finds himself confronted by the scarcity of external goods" (Cottle, 1991: 24).

the formative nature of perceptions, selfish sentiments gained through experience can manifest themselves differently in civil society.

There is a deceptive tendency in human nature that confuses the final product with an independent entity, as we have seen in Hume's argument regarding external objects. Justice is another example of this tendency. Some philosophers insist that justice is absolute and has its authority in the eternity or absoluteness of reason. In order to reveal the fallacy of this notion, it is necessary for Hume to clarify the evolution of justice. Hume tries to naturalise the notion of justice by providing the explanation of its formation.

2. Preceding Conditions for Justice

While Hobbes's theory of justice centres on life, and Locke on liberty, they aim to present a theory for deciding and securing property. Hume's theory of justice shares the common feature with Hobbes and Locke in that he focuses on property. The most significant characteristic of Hume's theory of justice is that he deals with property *per se* prior to dealing with life or liberty. It is necessary to understand why Hume focuses on property directly. Some commentators criticise Hume for his "bias" on property. Typically, Lawrence Scaff agrees with A. Woozley and says,

> The error of identifying the whole of justice with the rules governing property seems all too obvious: all those cases in which our considered moral duties contravene formal legal requirements must be excluded by Hume, as must those cases, far from uncommon nowadays, in which our sense of justice can only be satisfied through the exercise of human rights, Why, then, should Hume have thought that "perfect harmony" in society could be achieved by securing property and property rights? No doubt one should partly blame his classification of human 'goods' and the consequent belief that of these only "such possessions as we have acquir'd by our industry and good fortune" [T 3.2.2.7; SBN 487] present any serious problems for political philosophy. I can only agree that Hume's analysis here is woefully shortsighted and unconvincing. (Scaff, 1978: 102)

In fact, this criticism reflects a prevailing approach to understanding Hume.[205] Understanding the full scope of the discussion of property is the key to understanding Hume's theory of justice. Like Hobbes and Locke, Hume begins his discussion of the formation of justice by considering the natural conditions of human beings. He maintains that there are two conditions that describe the natural circumstances of human beings: "*the selfishness and confin'd generosity of man, along with the scanty provision nature has made for his wants*" (T 3.2.2.18; SBN 495). Justice is contingent on these natural conditions. This means that were these conditions different, there would be no justice; with unlimited natural resources, or with divinely inspired benevolence toward other people, there is no need for justice. Also, if people's possessions cannot be transferred from one person to another, justice is purposeless. Therefore, Humean justice is neither logical nor absolute.

These initial conditions prior to civil society already reveal the fundamental function that justice should fulfil. The contents of justice are determined by the initial conditions of the natural circumstances of mankind. First, the limited amount of natural resources means that people cannot take as much as they wish. So, it will be necessary to set a limit on their possessions, and this containment of desire is the basis of the system of property as rules of possessions. Thus, by the first condition, Hume's theory of justice comes to be concerned with the problem of distribution of goods. Second, in order to cope with the limited benevolence of people, justice has to be considered in reference to people's moral dispositions. Thus, by the second condition, Humean justice is to function as a virtue.

In this way, the basic nature of Humean justice is broadly based on the causal reaction of people as a whole to the natural conditions that precede society. For Hobbes, justice has its roots in anti-reality in the sense that justice is a means to prevent falling into a condition without justice; and for Locke, justice has its roots in a trans-reality (an ideal) that ought ideally to be realised by people. For Hume,

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[205] Scaff even criticises Hume because his concept of justice "is severed from the idea of rights" (Scaff, 1978: 103), forgetting Hume's central thesis is to repudiate once and for all the moral theories based on reason, the supposed human faculty of telling "right from wrong". Hume's criticism of reason is meant as an attack on the moral and political theories based on rights.

justice is a means of coping with human circumstances which are a result of our natural environment and human psychology.

Limited benevolence does not mean that human beings are totally self-regarding, but that human benevolence can extend only as far as the force of sympathy reaches. Hume thinks that "all the kind affections, taken together … over-balance all the selfishness" (T 3.2.2.5; SBN 487). Because of this, people are capable of abiding by the rules of justice spontaneously, not based on selfish motivation, in other words, without being enforced by an external power. Though a spontaneous rule of justice is unthinkable in Hobbes, Hume's theory of sympathy prepares the psychological mechanism that enables it.[206] As Hume says,

> By this means [N.B. convention], every one knows what he may safely possess; and the passions are restrain'd in their partial and contradictory motions. Nor is such a restraint contrary to these passions; for if so, it cou'd never be enter'd into, nor maintain'd; but it is only contrary to their heedless and impetuous movement. (T 3.2.2.9; SBN 489)

This moderate picture of human psychology is the necessary condition for human beings to adapt themselves to the new order that places them in a compatible relationship with other people in general. This contrasts sharply with the Hobbesian people who cannot alter their fundamentally ego-centred psychology. Therefore, Hume's theory of justice is linked to the psychological characteristic of human beings, which enables men to form a society without external force acting upon them. Practicability which is implied in convention is a key notion in the Humean theory of justice. Because society is a product of causal interactions, society is rightly construed as originating in human nature. Hume's basic understanding of society ascribes the origin to convention in opposition to the idea of a product of design either by people or by nature.[207]

However, as we shall see further on, it is wrong to believe that Hume's theory has nothing to say about rights.

[206] Hume's theory of sympathy signifies a preparation to maintain this (see Chapter 5).

[207] Needless to say, the criticism of the design argument is Hume's consistent theme.

Hume thinks that human beings must have fully experienced the disadvantages of their natural conditions and the advantages of human cooperation before they obtain the virtue of justice. In other words, it is impossible that human beings come to notice the necessity of justice by abstract reasoning. In the case of Hobbes, the absolute necessity of justice is appreciated by thought experiment. For Hume, family life provides not only the fruit of co-operation but also the necessary training for co-operating with other people. However, the family unit as the first and most primitive form of society itself poses a problem as man tries to develop it into a larger unit in order to enhance the advantages of human cooperation. Society requires a different principle than the natural principle of family. At this point, Hume recognises the occasion of the emergence of justice; justice is required in order to develop society by breaking the natural tie of the family. This contains a contradicting force to human psychology that tends to focus on one's proximate relations. Justice consists in overcoming this contradiction between the natural tendencies of human nature and society.

3. The Stability of Property

With the explanation of natural conditions, neither as an unrealistic hypothesis nor as an ideal, Hume clarifies the concrete step needed for creating society. It is to coordinate the property relationship among human beings. Justice as the principle of society emerges as a process of adjusting the relationship between people and objects, rather than between people as in Hobbes, or between government and people as in Locke. The primary model of the connection between human beings and property is already illustrated in his theory of sympathy. Possession of material goods contributes to the creation of an evaluation of the self (cf. chapter 5). So people are naturally inclined to possess external goods for the sake of improving their self-image, via the evaluation of other people. Here, in a different manner from Hobbes or Locke, is the beginning of people's quest for external goods. Clearly, unrestricted self-interests and avarice bring disorder to social relationships. Therefore, in order to attain stability, it is necessary to redirect the sentiment of self-interest properly so that it is not destructive to society.

Hume classifies human goods into three categories: "the internal satisfaction of our mind, the external advantages of our body, and the enjoyment of such possessions as we have acqur'd by our industry and good fortune" (T 3.2.2.6; SBN 487). Hume concludes that the third kind of good is the only object with which justice is concerned. First, inner peace of mind cannot be an object of justice, for it is not an object of possession, and thus it is safe from any robbery. Second, "the external advantages of our body" is excluded, for as Hume says, they "may be ravish'd for us, but can be of no advantage to him who deprives us of them" (T 3.2.2.7; SBN 487). This implies a criticism of the Lockean theory, which is based on the fundamental property of one's body.[208] Hume does not count the body as one of one's possessions, because it is not an object of artificial arrangement, nor is it transferable.[209] If the body is recognised as one's property, it presents a problem of the ontological status of the "self". If the owner of the body must be different from the body itself, then where is the owner of my body? The situation would be complicated if, for example, parents claimed the body of their child as their possession.[210] Thus, in order to recognise body as a property, one has to return to the metaphysical assumption of the Cartesian self or the Lockean mind as substance (Cf. *Essay* 2.23.5).

However, unlike mind and body, the situation is completely different with external goods in that they are at once very easily transferable, and vulnerable to the violence of other people. External goods carry no mark of its possessor, and can cause disputes among people regarding their ownership. Most of all, they are the object of people's avarice and self interest. Not only do disputes regarding ownership ignite the fiercest kind of struggle, they are totally destructive to society itself. Therefore, the ownership must be recognised by people in general, and cannot be made by self-appointment.

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[208] Locke shares this idea with Grotius, and Pufendorf (cf. e. g., Haakonssen, 1996: Ch. 1; Schneewind, 1998: Ch. 8).

[209] Bodily harm is a matter of commutative justice. Hume thinks that it can be dealt with by the natural virtues.

[210] Locke, consistent with this assumption, argues that parents should dominate their children until they acquire reason (*Two Treatises*, sects. 54-6, 61). The Lockean criterion of the "*Age to be free*" must be seen as too vague for Hume.

The fundamental threat for the stability of a society is the general tendency of people to violate the possessions of others, rather than a specific threat from specific people, precisely because society itself consists in the generality, and cannot cope with a general tendency to disorder. For example, if likely "burglars" can be specified in advance, and the number is relatively small, justice will not be necessary; people have only to remove those dangerous causes to resolve the problem once and for all. On the other hand, if people in general are convincingly determined to violate the possessions of others, i.e., when the whole society is swarming with ruffians, or in a state of emergency, to protect people's possessions from others would be too much a burden to carry, "the suspension of all laws of justice" would be the result (EPM 3.16; SBN 190). In order for justice to obtain, society should be more or less dominated by a general tendency to justice, though possibly accompanied by some exceptions.

Therefore, it is not arbitrary that Hume's theory of justice centres on property. Hume even emphasises that once the system of property is introduced, "there remains little or nothing to be done towards settling a perfect harmony and concord" (T 3.2.2.12; SBN 491). Hume understands that it is not correct that the main threat to society comes from violence toward other people (cf. Baier, 1991: 221; Postema, 1986: 103-4). Even if violence destroys society, it is only a proximate cause, and there is a further root cause for it.[211] His theory of sympathy supplies the ground for his position; human beings have no natural desire to injure other people. Human beings are naturally disinclined to cause pain under normal circumstances because of the mechanism of sympathy. In the case of sporadic breaches, people can cope with it by natural principles. However, the situation is totally different in the case of property. Human avarice toward external goods knows no satisfaction. And it is the main cause of people inflicting violence on others. People conflict with each other, often resorting to violence as a means to obtain external goods.

If people come to notice the benefit of society and recognise the cause that tends to disturb it, it should be only natural for them to search for a way to escape

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[211] Bentham shares the same idea that the main cause of social disturbance lies in material scarcity (cf. Postema, 1986: 104).

from the trouble. Social disorder is nothing but the lack of stability. Therefore, people look for stability. In Hume, the convention of not violating other's possessions represents a moderate awareness of the preference for peace. This can be seen as moderate version of the Hobbesian turn from war to "peace" in the "Fundamental Law of Nature" (*Leviathan*, 1.14). Therefore, Humean people naturally try to attain stability just as Hobbesian people seek peace to escape from the fear of a war of all against all. Now the problem is how to attain the stability of possessions. Hobbesian people hastily jump to the solution of the mutual covenant and the establishment of a common and absolute authority by relinquishing one's natural rights. Humean individuals, on the other hand, have no "rights" to renounce prior to society. The Humean artificial virtue of justice has to be developed not instantly but in a gradual process, so that Hume's explanation is not a hypothesis to be justified but an explanation of reality.

In the place of the Hobbesian natural right, Hume observes that there is an alternative mechanism equipped in human nature that serves to procure the stability of property, which is the psychological tendency of attachment to one's possessions. This is a sense that Hume explains as the second definition of being "natural": "as oppos'd to what is unusual" (T 3.1.2.10; SBN 474). Unlike the once and for all determination of reason, custom can be formed only gradually, which makes abiding by the rules of justice appear natural: the hallmark of the stability of a society. Hume is obviously critical of the idea of people resorting to authorities to acquire peace, because this is too abstract and complicated an idea to be embraced naturally.[212] Human beings feel attached to the possessions with which they engage in their daily activities. Habitual activities give them the occasion of improvement of skills, and eventually lead to the increase of the material conditions of the society. All these are impossible where there is no stability, since without stability people cannot habitually repeat their daily activities; without practice, there is no improvement.

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[212] Stephen Buckle argues that the Humean argument of justice can be understood as a theory of natural law that is determining the dictates of reason (Buckle, 1991: 296). Buckle is relying on Hume's passing statement that artificial virtue is not a matter of human morality, but it is a problem of "the degree of men's sagacity or folly" (T 3.2.2.13 ; SBN 492). However, he does not grasp the real thrust of Hume's idea. It is obvious for Hume that there is no such a thing as natural law to be discovered by reason.

Once stability is recognised as the *sine qua non* of the good life, the most effective way to secure stability is found easily; concentrate on one's own while letting others work in the same manner. It is noteworthy that these two represent the same; by concentrating on one's own, one naturally leaves the possession of others to themselves. And the latter is subordinate to the former. This is precisely in accordance with the psychological mechanism; therefore it can prevail naturally among ordinary people without resorting to "fear" or "reason". Furthermore, with the formation of this convention, any breach of the convention appears literally unnatural, and comes to be perceived as painful. There is only one more step before this convention is proclaimed as a conventional law, which becomes the initial law of justice. Because of convention, people are initiated into the practice of following the rules of justice, which will expand as necessary. Also, this implies the initial idea of rule by law.

This convention proves to be a significant solution to the problem of forming society. It brings an unintended and very significant consequence with it. Society is based on a crucially different principle from the family. One crucial difference between family and society is that the latter is constituted by anonymous people or people in general while the former is constituted by members all of whom are known to each other. Therefore, to form a social union, there has to be a principle that serves to unite people who are unknown to each other.

Convention meets this requirement because it is a principle of generality; convention, like language or money, serves to no specific person or no specific purpose. The scope that is determined by the same convention demarcates a society. By resorting to convention, people can relate with each other beyond their natural reach of physical and psychological contact. And the convention not to violate other people's property can prevail because it is in accordance with human nature. It is practicable for all the members of a society to participate in the formation of justice without any prior arrangement, because everyone always has "what is the most proximate to him".

Therefore, there is no gap in Hume between the creation of convention and the stability of society. Without intending the overall effect, the convention of

adhering to one's own possession naturally brings stability to the whole society. In other words, there is no gap between the means and the end in attaining peace in Hume. Because individual activity realises the unintended stability of society, there is no wonder that this final appearance of justice gives birth to the notion of providence in a naïve mind.

4. Mutuality and the General Point of View

The formation of the concept of justice is the most significant aspect in Hume's theory of justice. This is different from the explanation of why we approve the act of justice. This question is misleading because it presupposes the separation of the reason for our obeying the rules of justice from their formation and existence.[213] Hume's theory of justice as based on convention purports to avoid this dichotomy. For Hume, justice exists only as a functioning norm of virtue that binds people. Hume compares justice to the religious rite:

> 'tis one of the most mysterious and incomprehensible operations that can possibly be imagin'd, and may even be compar'd to *transubstantiation*, or *holy orders*, where a certain form of words, along with a certain intention, changes entirely the nature of an external object, and even of a human creature. (T 3.2.5.14; SBN 524)

This means that there is no objective existence of any law of justice, but it is only a product of convention.

Justice consists in its psychological sense of necessity for controlling people's behaviour. In other words, justice exists as our convention of behaving on the supposition of justice, similar to the case of causation. The concept of justice is solid because it is deeply interwoven into our social conventions which come prior to

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[213] Jacqueline Taylor understands Hume's theory of justice as explaining why we approve the act of justice (Jacqueline, 1998: 5-30). John Rawls maintains that the motivation to justice is "the desire for a character" (Rawls, 2000: 68). This relates to our rational consideration of justice, which applies only to a part of Hume's theory of justice. The gist of Hume's theory of justice in the *Treatise* lies in its connection to perceptions in general. As we will see below, the normative argument of justice can properly be understood only on the basis of the theory of custom.

our personal consciousness. It is also mistaken to identify the explanation of the concept of justice with the justification of the current system of property.[214] Hume's theory of justice is a story how the concept of justice emerges in an empirical manner. Only the application of justice can be the subject of justification, but the justification is first possible on the basis of the notion of justice itself. Thus, it is possible to ask whether something is just, but it is impossible to justify the concept of justice itself. It is to the latter that Hume supplies a naturalistic explanation.

Conventional stability of property does not simply mean the restriction of the blind pursuit of self-interest. More significantly, convention introduces a new dimension to the notion of self-interest; it is an interest not directly pursued, but realised through mutuality. In the first place, Hume's theory of sympathy reveals that the purely individual benefit that is cut off from the rest of the society is a deception, because human goods are evaluated socially.[215] Even seemingly purely physical desires appear and are fulfilled only in a socially formed manner. One cannot even understand "thirsty" or "hungry" until one learns how to deal with them; that babies feel "thirstier" or "hungrier" only as uncertain pains is evidence of this.

In a similar sense, individual interests without sound community are only deceptions. For something to be valuable it has to be recognised by others. Most notably, money is only a piece of paper without social recognition.[216] Therefore, justice serves to create and coordinate interests in the social dimension of life. No human being can work exclusively for himself, or even by himself. Human activities have influence upon others in a manner that is beyond direct perceptions, and human lives are supported by the works of others beyond identification. For example,

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[214] Hume is a conservative neither of his time nor of today. He was a most radical critic of the convention of his time. It is a mistake to say that he insists on the fixation of the present property system. His theory is to explain how the notion of justice and society is created based on property.

[215] This relates to the thesis that "taste" is the fundamental concept for the Scottish Enlightenment. In this regard, Hume's "Of the Standard of Taste" in *Essays* is especially important (cf. Broadie, 2003: Ch. 14).

[216] Hobbes regards money as a "measure" of all commodities, and compares it to the "Bloud (*sic.*)" of the commonwealth (*Leviathan* 174), while Locke considers money as a means for preserving goods. Though Hume does not discuss money thematically in the *Treatise*, the idea of "interest" as socially constructed is indicative of his idea of money as an "instrument". Hume asserts that industry and refinement of all kinds promote universal diffusion and circulation of money, which strengthens the kingdom (*Essay*, "Of money").

clothes, food, and houses are a complex resulting from numerous activities. In this sense, individuals reflect the whole society. Therefore, Humean justice is fundamentally a principle of human mutuality. Hobbesian mutuality lies in the recognition of the equality of others with oneself, which occurs prior to the establishment of sovereign. Lockean individuals realise mutuality by the equal application to others the prescription of the natural law. For Hume, however, mutuality is realised through convention in which people seek self-interest in a cooperative scheme with others. This is possible when one is expected to behave in the same manner he expects others to behave toward him. Hume explains,

> Taking any single act, my justice may be pernicious in every respect; and 'tis only upon the supposition, that others are to imitate my example, that I can be induc'd to embrace that virtue; since nothing but this combination can render justice advantageous, or afford me any motives to conform myself to its rules. (T 3.2.2.22; SBN 498)

This shows that justice implies mutuality of the self and others. Because there already prevails the rule of justice, people can rely on it, even abandoning seemingly immediate interests. It is first possible when people are freed from the direct pursuit of self-interest. People depart from their immediate, self-centred reactions by correcting initial perceptions. In this sense, justice is founded on the generality of perceptions, rather than on principles such as impartiality, rationality, or fairness.

For Hume, mutuality does not mean that people must engage in some common enterprise. On the contrary, in Humean convention, each person has only to do his duty, and to leave the rest to other people. Behind this lies a realisation that self-interest can be realised most efficiently by taking care of one's own possessions, while leaving the possessions of others to other people. This is a paradoxical way of actualising self-interest, and can never be invented by any abstract reasoning. The emergence of this convention can only originate from experience, but the final figure appears like a product of design or providence because it is beyond individual intention. This is best illustrated by commercial society based on the division of

labour that Hume had anticipated both in theory and in his personal experience. Hume illustrates the convention of mutual expectation in the well-known example of the people rowing a boat together.

> I observe that it will be for my interest to leave another in the possession of his goods, *provided* he will act in the same manner with regard to me. He is sensible of a like interest in the regulation of his conduct. When this common sense of interest is mutually express'd, and is known to both, it produces a suitable resolution and behaviour. ... Two men, who pull the oar of a boat, do it by an agreement or convention, tho' they have never given promises to each other. (T 3.2.2.10; SBN 490)

Hume compares the British Isles to the boat. The boatmen do not pull the oars independently, for each pulls the oar counting on the other doing the same thing. Through convention, people begin to act counting on the action of unknown people in pursuit of their self-interest. People rely upon other people who behave likewise. Thus, the Humean mutuality is neither moral, nor rational, but conventional. This represents the most fundamental basis of interdependence among people.[217] Hume illustrates the difference between benevolence and justice in an example from architecture.

> The happiness and prosperity of mankind, arising from the social virtue of benevolence and its subdivisions, may be compared to a wall, built by many hands, which still rises by each stone that is heaped upon it, and receives increase proportional to the diligence and care of each workman. The same happiness, raised by the social virtue of justice and its subdivisions, may be compared to the building of a vault, where each individual stone would, of itself, fall to the ground; nor is the whole fabric supported but by the mutual assistance and combination of its corresponding parts. (EPM Appendix 3.5; SBN 305)

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[217] This form of interdependency anticipates Hume's theory of promise. Promise is based on interdependence in a more and more explicit manner. In this sense Hume's theory of property underlies his theory of promise.

This clearly suggests that the essence of justice consists in mutual dependency; people support each other by being placed in the situation of connecting with and supporting each other. A vault would collapse, were the individual stones that comprise it separated from each other. They are not arranged by any order that is independent of them. Likewise justice creates the mutual relationship in which each individual depends on others. Though each member directly connects only with his neighbours, they contribute to, and obtain benefit from the whole construction of society. Justice guarantees the point of view that sees one's interests from the common perspective with other people in general. Thus, justice represents the general point of view.[218]

The primary function of justice is to enable people to concentrate on their own work, without worrying too much about the behaviour of others in the understanding that others do the same. Thus Hume rewrites the Lockean concept of labour. Humean individuals work with their possession, while Lockean individuals are supposed to act on nature. In this sense, Hume's theory is more tuned to describing industrialised society. Once justice is established, it changes the way of realising personal interest. This is because justice requires abandoning the direct pursuit of particular interests. As Hume says,

> A single act of justice is frequently contrary to *public interest*; and were it to stand alone, without being follow'd by other acts, may, in itself, be very prejudicial to society. When a man of merit, of a beneficent disposition, restores a great fortune to a miser, or a seditious bigot, he has acted justly and laudably, but the public is a real sufferer. … But however single acts of justice may be contrary, either to public or private interest, 'tis certain, that the whole plan or scheme is highly conducive, or indeed absolutely requisite, both to the support of society, and the well-being of every individual. (T 3.2.2.22; SBN 497)

Hume emphasises that justice gives a different meaning to "a single act" from its direct effect. The full meaning of a single action is not determined only by

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[218] In the *Enquiry*, Hume emphasises that the purpose of justice is "the general *interest* of mankind" (EPM 3.28; SBN 195). This clearly suggests that justice consists in generality. It is

its direct effect.[219] In this way, Hume's theory is thoroughly associative. This is clearly explained in his theory of abstract ideas; what confers meaning to a particular is the general effect of its similar kind (see Chapter 2). In the same manner, a single action does not have general meaning until it is evaluated as a particular of its general kind, which is realised through the creation of a new convention. The meaning of interest between the pre-social state and social state is totally different; individual interest is possible only in the social state. In fact, Hume is no less uncompromising about the necessity of justice than Hobbes. Hume says in a Hobbesian tone:

> And even every individual person must find himself a gainer, on balancing the account; since, without justice, society must immediately dissolve, and every one must fall into that savage and solitary condition, which is infinitely worse than the worst situation that can possibly be suppos'd in society. (T 3.2.22; SBN 497)

Justice is necessary for sustaining society, and without society Hume understands human life is as bad as the Hobbesian description of the state of nature. Fundamentally, justice has more to do with the framework in which the interest is produced. The Humean sense of justice as personal interest does not make sense without supposing a point of view that represents particular action in its generality. Just like in custom particulars are regarded as instances of the generality; the convention of justice enables people to see their behaviour in the general scheme of justice.

5. Rights as Causation

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very conspicuous that Hume explains justice referring to the notion of "generality" in *Enquiry*.

[219] This is different from the long-term effect of the single action as long as it is still seen as a single action. Therefore, justice has nothing to do with the term of interest, long or short. John Stewart asserts that "Hume's position is that human nature remaining constant and the economic circumstances remaining about the same, both justice and obedience to a good government always are in the long-term interest of a person as an individual" (Stewart, 1992: 177).

While Locke certainly does not mean to surprise us by the concept of property when he refers to our body as the first thing we have as property, Hume induces us to be surprised by the mysterious power of property, as he compares it to "superstitions" (EMP 3.36; SBN 198). However, property is indeed quite mysterious if we view it from a causal perspective. Hume says,

> The same species of reasoning it may be thought, which so successfully exposes superstition, is also applicable to justice; nor is it possible, in the one case more than in the other, to point out, in the object, that precise quality or circumstance, which is the foundation of the sentiment.
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> But there is this material difference between *superstition* and *justice*, that the former is frivolous, useless, and burdensome; the latter is absolutely requisite to the well-being of mankind and existence of society. (EPM 3.37-8; SBN 199)

Property consists in the mysterious power to prevent all people except the owner from using it. Why is it that the same physical object can exert such different causal influence on people's behaviour? There is no such thing as property in nature; all we perceive in nature are particular objects. And none of them bears any sign that presents itself as a property of a particular person. Still, property exerts a power to regulate and control people's behaviour. Once justice is established, people will be forced to respect the property of others by a morality that is endorsed by a political authority. Therefore, property means nothing but this unnatural power which reaches each and every member of the society with an equally binding force. No individual is more strongly obliged to refrain from using another's property than any other person.[220]

It is clear that the power of property does not derive from any inherent quality of the object. Then, the power can only derive from a relation, which is represented by the general point of view (see Chapter 3). Property consists in a

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[220] It is impossible for a sovereign to exert physical power to make people obey the law when a significant number of people disobey the authority. On the other hand, it would be contradiction to the empiricist tenet to assume the eternal "natural law" that binds all the people exists.

causal power that in a sense parallels the psychological sense of necessity. There is no essential difference between the power of a physical object and that of property in that both compel a certain type of behaviour based on acquired beliefs. Through convention, people feel compelled to refrain from violating the domain of others. The power of property is in reality nothing but those collective negative commitments of individuals. In this way, Hume explains the rule of justice without resorting to any external force.

Unlike the allegation of some commentators, Hume's theory of justice comprises a theory of rights. Hume's understanding of property as a socially constructed power explains the crucial moral and political notion of rights. It is Hume's conscious strategy to replace the Lockean understanding of rights as an inherent quality of a person with his causal explanation. This indicates Hume's different perspective; his Copernican turn from a substance-centred to a relation-centred notion of property. Hume explains the mechanism through which human beings can be regarded as having rights, and why the rights command other people to behave in a certain way. Therefore, he uses a similar strategy to explain rights as in his discussion of causation. He clearly understands rights as the product of convention,

> After this convention, concerning abstinence from the possessions of others, is enter'd into, and every one has acquir'd stability in his possessions, there immediately arise the ideas of justice and injustice; as also those of *property*, *right*, and *obligation*. The latter are altogether unintelligible without first understanding the former. Our property is nothing but those goods, whose constant possession is establish'd by the laws of society; that is, by the laws of justice. Those, therefore, who make use of the words *property*, or *right*, or *obligation*, before they have explain'd the origin of justice, or even make use of them in that explication, are guilty of a very gross fallacy, and can never reason upon any solid foundation. A man's property is some object related to him. This relation is not natural, but moral, and founded on justice (T 3.2.2.11; SBN 491).

Once the concept of right is established in the instance of a property right, this concept can be extended to cover other more abstract kinds of rights such as human

rights, social rights, *etc.*. As property is nothing but the moral relationship of people in reference to a certain object, rights are also the creation of moral relationships. What are called rights are in the first instance someone's exclusive use of his possession, which is empty unless people in general protect them. Thus the notion of rights emerges with the system of property.

It is important to note that right does not mean that people in general are obliged to take some positive action with regard to the right. For example, the right to life does not entail giving life to the person who asserts it.[221] In general the most people can do to respect the right to life of other people is to partake in the general practice of not taking life, in the same manner that they do not violate the possessions of others. One individual's rights are the obligation of others. Rights and obligations are two sides of the same coin. To other people, the assertion of rights appears only as prohibitions. In this way, people are associated with one another through rights and obligations; others are the object of obligation and the self is a subject of right. Thus justice consists more in a negative commitment, because this is the only way the multitude of people support a particular person.

Thus, Hume's theory of causation prepares the way for the theory of justice. Just as causation is a product of imagination, so rights are products of imagination. The concept of rights produces the concept of liberty as free access to one's property. Therefore, the Humean theory of justice explains the realistic condition for the emergence of liberty.

6. The Rules for Determining Property

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[221] To be more exact, positive obligation is a derivative form of negative obligation. For example, modern states are obliged to provide basic human needs. This is because not to do so can be interpreted as robbing man of his basic human needs. This is based on the fundamental idea of nature as the supplier of human necessity. This is the Humean rephrasing of Locke's dictum that God had given the earth to mankind in common. The implication is that where people can no longer survive without taking from others, justice can no longer obtain.

Some commentators criticise Hume because he cares so much about the existence and rigid observance of the rules of property, and yet cares so little about which rules in particular are adopted.[222] Admittedly, Hume says,

> the preference... is often founded more on taste and imagination than on any solid argument. Public utility is the general object of all courts of judicature; and this utility too requires a stable rule in all controversies: but where several rules, nearly equal and indifferent, present themselves, it is a very slight turn of thought which fixes the decision in favour of either party. (EMP Appendix 3.10; SBN 308-9)

> That there be a separation or distinction of possessions, and that this separation be steady and constant; this is absolutely required by interests of society, and hence the origin of justice and property. What possessions are assigned to particular persons; that is, generally speaking, pretty indifferent; and is often determined by frivolous views and considerations. (EPM Appendix 3 footnote 65; SBN 309 footnote)

Therefore, John Plamenatz observes,

> We are seriously invited to believe that, though it matters enormously that there should be some rules of property and that they should not change, it does not much matter what they are ... that argument is not illogical, but it is odd and unrealistic. I am less moved to refute it than to wonder how it ever comes to be made. I feel about it as I should do if someone were to say: "I am against divorce, because, while it does not much matter whom we marry, it matters enormously that we should marry and stay married". (Plamenatz, 1963: 309-10)

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[222] David Miller says, Hume "might argue that it was a matter of comparative indifference which principles of acquisition, transfer, etc. were adopted, provided that these principles were generally acknowledged by the population at large. It is, in other words, a mistake to look for a justification of the principles which fill out the property theory; what can be justified is the system of property as a whole, not its detailed rules. In this way questions about desert never enter the picture; the Lockean principle of acquisition can be accepted, not as an ethically justified principle, but as a convention whose value is that it assigns property rights somehow and that it commands general recognition. ... Although these rules (five rules of acquisition plus a rule of transfer) would naturally suggest themselves to anyone who had to decide on the

The ghost of Locke is hard to get rid of. Hume is certainly indifferent about who owns what, but he is not indifferent about the "rules" of property. These two are crucially different, because this is what the rule of law means. Hume opposes Aristotle, Hobbes, Pufendorf, and Locke, who imagine they decide ownership not by "frivolous views and considerations", but by the unshakable reasoning of the justificatory ground of approbation. This is because he is critical of the possibility that by serious views and considerations property can be allocated to the most appropriate person who really deserves it. Most of all, it is crucial to understand the Humean ground for the five rules.

Hume stipulates the following five rules for determining property: "present possession", "occupation", "prescription", "accession" and "succession". Here as elsewhere, his argument is a challenge to the traditional theory of justice. First, Hume's target is clearly the Aristotelian tradition, which considers justice as a distribution in accordance with desert. Hume thinks that it is virtually impossible to decide individually "who deserves what", because,

> so great is the uncertainty of merit, both from its natural obscurity, and from the self-conceit of each individual, that no determinate rule of conduct would ever result from it; and the total dissolution of society must be the immediate consequence. (EPM 3.23; SBN 193)

No one is willing to admit that he deserves less than his fellows. It is certainly impossible to find the most appropriate owner for each item that can be regarded as property. Hume emphatically warns that "Fanatics may suppose, *that dominion is founded on grace*, and *that saints alone inherit the earth*" (EPM 3.23; SBN 193). On the other hand, the equal distribution of property is not effective either, because it will soon result in an inequality given the difference of people's ability and industry. Hume says,

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allocation of property rights, they were neither capable of, nor stood in need of, justification in the strict sense" (Miller, 1980a: 9).

> But historians, and even common sense, may inform us, that, however specious these ideas of *perfect* equality may seem, they are really, at bottom, *impracticable*; and were they not so would be extremely *pernicious* to human society. (EPM 3.26; SBN 194)

As property is always particular, it is theoretically impossible to divide property in equal proportion. Hume's argument about the rules deciding property endorses his fundamental view of justice: justice should not be founded by any moral concept, such as right, desert, equality, and fairness. These are first understood once justice is established. To use these concepts for explaining justice not only constitutes a vicious circle, but also is dangerously misleading, which is indicated in Hume's criticism of rationalistic moral theory.[223] Thus, Hume avoids the difficulty of the rationalist theory of justice and develops his theory in a manner that is in accord with human nature.[224]

Hume's five basic rules for deciding property allocation is not arbitrary at all. On the contrary it is very consistent with his theory of convention and sympathy that he has so elaborately argued so far. On the whole, Hume seems to adopt the basic framework of the natural modes of acquisition in Roman law with a very significant difference that he places "present possession (T 3.2.3.4; SBN 503-5)" as the first rule (cf. Barry, 1962, 130-140). Hume's choice of the five rules is based on the consideration that they should be acknowledged and accepted by "the population at large". As convention produces the only viable system of justice, the rule to determine property must be in congruence with the principles of human nature. It is significant to note that the Humean criterion for all five rules consists in the psychological attachment to the object by the possessor. The sense of attachment is the only natural bond that connects humans and objects beyond direct physical grasp. It is based on his associationist psychology according to which the sense of attachment increases or decreases in accordance with the distance from the object. In

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[223] Hume denies equality as the primary requirement for justice. Most of all, there is no impression corresponding to "equality". The notion of equality is first understood with the establishment of the concept of "identity" (see Chapter 4).

terms of human psychology, to possess something means to feel stronger attachment to the thing than any other person does. This psychological reality should be reflected in the legal relationship for the system of property to function among people in general.

Hume says, "Men generally fix their affections more on what they are possess'd of, than on what they never enjoy'd" (T 3.2.1.14; SBN 482). All of the five rules can be derived from this principle that realises the stability of the system of property because a psychological cohesive power is a principle of stability. This should be seen as a strong justification for Hume's rules of determining property.

> We may conclude, therefore, that, in order to establish laws for the regulation of property, we must be acquainted with the nature and situation of man; must reject appearances, which may be false, though specious; and must search for those rules, which are, on the whole, most *useful* and *beneficial*. Vulgar sense and slight experience are sufficient for this purpose; where men give not way to too selfish avidity, or too extensive enthusiasm. (EPM 3.27; SBN 194-195)

Hume tries to remove the cause of disturbance by leaving the problem of deciding property to natural principle. In this way, Hume gives a psychological foundation to the Hobbesian law that "those things that cannot be enjoyed in common, nor divided, ought to be adjudged to the First Possessor; and in some cases to the First-Born, as acquired by Lot" (*Leviathan* 108). Certainly in preparation for this argument Hume explains the importance of the principle of imagination, of his associationist psychology in Book 2 of the *Treatise*. This is another significance of the consistency between each Book of the *Treatise*. Therefore, it is a mistake to dismiss Hume's rules as arbitrary. The rules to decide property are as consistent with the theory of human nature offered in Hume as these are in Hobbes and Locke. If property does not derive from those rules, the system of property cannot prevail spontaneously. Humean justice is necessitated for the overall objective of attaining

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[224] David Miller criticises Lockean labour theory that "it is then no longer possible to separate questions about the original acquisition of property from questions about the distributive pattern that later results from these acquisitions" (Miller, 1980a: 9).

the stability of human relationships. Society is most stable when it is ruled by that principle that constitutes stability itself.

The five Humean rules show that property ownership does not depend on the inherent quality of the object at all. Property is determined exclusively by the convention in society; objects have no claim on their possessors. Precisely because this is a unilateral way of fixing property relations, property is transferable to anyone. In this way, anyone can become an owner of property, and property is transferable in society. Unlike Locke, Hume does not have in mind primarily "estate" as property. Rather, Hume's properties signify movable property (industrial products and money). Society is unified as an arena for the circulation of properties. All people can be equally qualified as owners of property, which is the precondition for commercial society. Free commerce presupposes and strengthens the equality of people *qua* owners of property, which in turn develops the condition for free and equal commercial society.[225] Based on this foundation of the basic law of justice as the stability of property, Hume's second law of justice stipulates the transference of property by consent. Thus, the first law of justice forms the foundational idea of justice.[226]

7. The Problem of "the Sensible Knave"

So far, we have seen how the artificial virtue of justice comes to be established. Now let us consider the meaning of the morality of justice as distinguished from convention. It makes sense to ask why it is that Hume discusses the artificial virtue of justice before natural virtue. It would certainly be natural to discuss natural virtue first and then artificial virtue.[227] This problem is related to an interesting discussion among Hume commentators regarding the rationality and morality of the Humean justice. In the *Enquiries*, Hume controversially remarks:

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[225] This idea seems to lie behind Hume's optimism that commerce promotes art and morality in society (*Essays*, "Of the Progress of Art").
[226] The second and the third laws of justice will be dealt with in Chapter 8.
[227] Pall Ardal says, Hume's "order of exposition is unfortunate, and has given more plausibility to a wrong interpretation of this particular statement" (Ardal, 1966: 183). We will see that Ardal's is among the incorrect interpretations.

> though it is allowed that, without a regard to property, no society could subsist; yet according to the imperfect way in which human affairs are conducted, a sensible knave, in particular incidents, may think that an act of inquity or infidelity will make a considerable addition to his fortune, without causing any considerable breach in the social union and confederacy. That *honesty is the best policy*, may be a good general rule, but is liable to many exceptions; and he, it may perhaps be thought, conducts himself with most wisdom, who observes the general rule, and takes advantage of all the exceptions. (EPM 9.22; SBN 282-283)

The sensible knave reminds us of Hobbes's "Foole" who

> has sayd in his heart, there is no such thing as Justice; and sometimes also with his tongue; seriously alleaging, that every man's conservation, and contentment, being committed to his own care, there could be no reason, why every man might not do what he thought conduced thereunto: and therefore also to make, or not make ; keep, or not keep Covenants, was not against Reason, when it conduced to ones benefit. (*Leviathan* 101)

As we have seen, Hume asserts that sensible knaves "are the real dupes, and have sacrificed the invaluable enjoyment of a character, with themselves at least, for the acquisition of worthless toys and gewgaws" (EPM 9.25; SBN 283). Gerald Postema argues that Hume's answer to the sensible knave is crucial to his entire theory of justice. He says:

> Hume seeks the origins of justice (and the foundations of its rationality) in the self-correction of the interested passions achieved through the promptings of observation, reflection, and judgement. That is, Hume's argument starts from a perspective shared with the knave. If the knave's challenge cannot be answered, Hume's project fails on its own criteria of success. (Postema, 1995: 110-1)

Therefore, according to Postema, Hume must show a satisfactory answer to the problem of the sensible knave in order to prove the validity of his theory of

justice. Postema himself asserts that Hume's reply is "ultimately unsuccessful" (Postema, 1995: 111).[228] This problem is concerned with one of the most significant problems of moral philosophy: "why be moral". Surely, the consideration of this problem clarifies the fundamental points of Hume's theory of justice, and leads us into a deeper understanding of Hume's theory. First of all, it is necessary to note that Hume's theory of justice does not purport to satisfy an openly convinced "vicious" individual to accept the morality of justice from the motivation of self-interest. Hume admits that if someone has lost "a considerable motive to virtue", it is "a bit difficult to find any" answer to persuade him (EPM 9.23; SBN 283). Hume sounds ironical here; he might consider it the task of a political or a medical institution to deal with such people. It is a mistake to take this, like John Rawls does, as meaning that Hume is not "concerned in the least with rational egoists who want to be persuaded that following virtue is to their advantage or for their good" (Rawls, 2000: 99). On the contrary, we should understand Hume's argument as his answer to the question "why should we be moral?"

Hume's argument can be divided into two parts; he deals with the problems of feasibility, and of psychological stability. First, Hume observes that the sensible knave will most likely fail to persecute his maxim of cunning, and then, even if it succeeds, he is a loser of the requisite for happiness of "[i]nward peace of mind, consciousness of integrity, a satisfactory review of our own conduct" (EPM 9.23; SBN 283).

Hume observes that the maxim of the sensible knave stands on a mistaken understanding about the "perfect crime". The sensible knave acknowledges the importance of justice for the interest of society. He only makes use of every exception while pretending to be observing every rule of morality. He will not breach the justice if he will lose his reputation by his deeds. Now, is it realistically possible to take advantage of the evasion of rules of justice?

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[228] Postema also says that Hume's argument "exaggerates the force of habit and the limitations of individual judgement in much the same way as the vault analogy exaggerates the fragility of social order" (Postema, 1995: 125). Postema is not the only commentator. David Gouthie similarly sees Hume's reply as a failure (Gouthie, 1995: 129-54). M. Baron argues that Hume

Hume denies the idea of the "uncertainty of causes" as a superficial view of the "vulgar" (T 1.3.12.5; SBN 132). The idea of a perfect crime stands on an assumption that there can be "uncertainty" in the cause; even though society and the public suffer from someone's injustice, the cause may not be detected. Injustice is very conspicuous not least because we never fail to note any loss to ourselves suffered by the injustice of other people (cf. Rawls, 2000: 67). The assumption is that if the sensible knave knows that he will be detected, he will not breach justice. Now, every breach leaves the evidence of criminal action, and even the most sensible knave cannot make his living from injustice without even pretending he is obeying the law. If the gain from the secret action of injustice is bigger, it is more likely the fact will reveal itself, easily betraying the cunning of the sensible knave. In terms of cost-performance, the gain from undetectable injustice will presumably be much less than the gain through just activities. The sensible knave will have to keep anxiously running away from his past criminal action by "adjusting" unjust activities, while pretending to be a just person. Here, a fundamental problem arises; what is the standard of successful injustice? Simply, "being undetected" seems to be the most important one. In order to attain this purpose, the sensible knave will not spare any sacrifice. Here is seen a contradiction between the gain through unjust action and its cost. He could have attained his ends by not committing any criminality.

Let us concede to admit a more vulgar supposition that in many cases injustices are kept undetected behind the veil of anonymousness, as many cases actually seem to be. Suppose he somehow manages to make both ends meet. According to Hume, however, this is accompanied by the most disastrous thing: the loss of peace of mind. Hume asserts that the gain from injustice amounts to nothing compared to this burden. Even if the knave obtained great sums of money, he could not buy peace of mind with money.

Yet we must make another concession by obeying the vulgar psychology. What if the sensible knave does not care about being able to peacefully reflect on his conduct, and somehow he is convinced of not being detected (Blackburn, 1998a:

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knows that the advancement of self-interests through justice is indefensible, but that it is his noble lie for the sake of society (Baron, 1995: 155-70).

208f.)? Postema asserts that Hume can at most resort to the theory of custom; the force of custom is so powerful that we follow the rule of justice even though we would gain by breaking it. On this argument, Postema concludes that Hume's answer is unconvincing because Hume's argument "exaggerates the force of habit and the limitations of individual judgement" (Postema, 1995: 125).

Postema's criticism might repudiate the Humean theory of justice; there is no theory in Hume that shows the convincing ground for following the rules of justice. At this point, the more fundamental question arises whether justice is only a convention. If so, we might as well ignore it whenever we have a good chance of getting away with our private interests. Let us not trivialise this question, and consider a case where we have a good chance of obtaining our personal interests by sacrificing the public interest without being detected.[229] It is not a problem about how we should deal with the sensible knave out there, but how we deal with the sensible knave in ourselves. In the former case, the question is already solved, and there will only be a technical problem of detecting those "bad" people to be punished. But precisely in order for us to do so, it must be theoretically clear that we have reason to deny the sensible knave. Are we in fact dupes by following the rules of justice, where the breach is in the benefit of our private interests? Or, is there a genuine reason why we should follow the rules of justice?

This problem touches upon the Humean concept of self-interest. Hume's answer can be found in his concept of the general point of view, which is a view which sees self-interest as one particular among other similar interests. As Hobbes observes, if we are all sensible knaves who only take advantage of the system of justice, justice does not function at all without the power of a sovereign who forces us into justice. However, Humean justice lies in the fact that people spontaneously obey the rules of justice at the conscious expense of their immediate and direct interest. As we have seen above, justice first emerges with the formation of a general point of view. Then the problem can be stated as whether or not there really is a general point of view that approves of justice.

Thus, the credibility of Hume's argument depends on whether or not there is a general point of view that sees self-interest differently from how the sensible knave does. As discussed above, human nature leads us to leave direct perception, and to rely on custom that reflects the general point of view. The same principle is persistently applicable throughout the development of perception in general, and thus the human world. Therefore, it is impossible to deny the general point of view so long as we behave as normal human beings. At the stage of our human development, our communicating with others, or our behaving as normal human beings, we are equipped, by virtue of custom, with the general point of view that clearly sees justice as a priority over our direct private interest. By the same token, it is impossible for us to become convinced sensible knaves, so long as we acknowledge the value of, and have benefits from, having a society or enjoying the pleasure of human communication, because all of this normal behaviour is supported by the general point of view in multiple layers. This is the Humean ground for saying that hypocrites and enthusiast, and also false philosophers, cannot be consistent with themselves; they do not believe themselves what they say.

Hume believes that as people increase their communication, their morality improves (cf. *Essays*: "Of Refinement in the Arts"). With the same psychological force of necessity with which we acknowledge causation, the existence of the external world, sentiments of other people, we are forced to acknowledge the authority of justice. As evidence for this fact, it is difficult for us to deny justice in public. This difficulty is parallel to the inevitability of taking up the general point of view, owing to which we behave and communicate as normal persons. In fact, the public represents the general point of view. Our daily moral disputes are concerned only with the interpretation and application of justice, rather than the concept of justice itself.

The fact that societies universally have some system of morality and legal institutions, however variable, shows that the general point of view dominates over

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[229] If a breach of a rule of justice is purely based on the inefficiency of the rule in terms of the public interest, we can change the rule to reflect rational public interest by a lawful manner. The real crux of this problem is the relationship between public and personal interests.

that of the private interests in the final balance.[230] It is also important to note that even the extremely "sensible" knave considers his behaviour from the general point of view in order to persecute his personal project successfully, just or unjust. Therefore, the most considerate sensible knave will rationally try to gain his interests without breaching justice. This can be the Humean answer to the "private vice and public virtue" controversy; the most sensitive, not rational, private vice leads to justice. This is the Humean explanation why society naturally attains harmony and prosperity through morality.[231] In this way, Hume illustrates that "private" vice and public "virtue" ultimately coincide in justice.[232]

That Hume explained justice based on the same principle of the general point of view indicates his strategy of giving the firmest ground possible to the system of justice. Postema clearly underestimates the deep-rooted authority Hume ascribes to custom, because he like other commentators does not see the close connection between Hume's epistemology and his moral theory. In fact, Hume's theory of justice is the zenith of his project of the science of human nature, in which Hume radically transforms the traditional theory of natural law.

Justice provides the absolutely necessary framework for all human activities. On the basis of justice, liberty, right, leisure, industry, stability, and most of all, the sense of security are first introduced.[233] These are *sine qua non* for people to act as citizens. From the general point of view, therefore, the value of a just action is very obvious. The alleged interests that the sensible knave may pilfer from his injustice are nothing compared to all the benefits of society.[234] The sensible knave himself relies on justice for his unjust conduct; the sensible knave needs justice in order to conduct his injustice, though his very conduct undermines that justice.[235] Moreover,

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[230] Only in extreme cases, where considering the final balance becomes impossible, does the suspension of justice result.
[231] This is also Hume's anticipation of Smithean social harmony through the unseen hand.
[232] In this sense, Hume replaced the Mandevillian problem between private activity and public benefit with causal explanation (cf. Furuya, 2003).
[233] Let us remember that the sense of stability is what Hume establishes by the theory of the external object.
[234] Of course there will be a point where society can no longer accommodate his waste and collapses. Annette Baier presents a similar argument (Baier, 1991: 253).
[235] This can be viewed as a version of Plato's saying that the unjust man conflicts with himself.

he needs justice more than he needs the advantages of injustice, because injustice is parasitic on justice.[236] The plain evidence for this is that the criminals rely on justice in their trial. As justice is founded on the general point of view, any loss through just action can be compensated by society if it is esteemed undue from the general point of view.

Hume deals with artificial virtue first before dealing with the natural virtue because natural virtue is impossible to understand prior to the artificial virtue of justice in a double sense. First, individual human beings lack a social dimension before the formation of society through the system of justice, and second, natural virtue is most feasible within the framework of justice, because it is socially constructed. Mere physical and psychological developments are not enough to compose "people". Physical and psychological human beings become social individuals only with rights conferred through the system of justice. There is no abstract self existing in the world but only those that are physically, psychologically, *and* socially constructed. Thus the final products of perception are moral beings. In this sense, Hume's *Treatise* is at once the story of the formation of society and of moral beings; they can only be the outcome of the natural development of human perceptions. For Hume, therefore, morality is first possible as the development of human nature. In this comprehensive sense, his theory is a moral philosophy, and Hume is a moralist (cf. Phillipson, 1979).

As we have discussed in his theory of causation and external objects, the belief in causation is constructed by the general point of view. Now it is clear that, in the same manner, the belief in justice consists in the general point of view. Justice is inseparably connected with the sense of solidity. This explains the tendency of identifying the creator of both justice and the "heaven and earth". Thus, where Immanuel Kant asserts that "*fiat iustitia, pereat mundus* (let justice reign even if all the rogues in the world perish because of it)",[237] Hume would maintain that when the

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[236] The Humean ground to abide by the rule of justice is different from the Kantian ground that to observe justice is a requirement of universality, and therefore, injustice is contradictious, is against the dictation of reason. However, the Humean ground is concerned with the real conditions of human behaviour.

[237] Kant's own translation in German (Kant, 1996: 345).

perception of justice cannot obtain, the world will also perish. This is now understandable for us; when we suffer from either mental disorder or the extreme conditions of social disorder, there is no justice constructed by the general point of view. In those cases, heaven and earth will *literally* "perish".

How then does Hume explain the fact that there still seem to be a lot of unrepentant "sensible knaves"? Though the discussion of the sensible knave overtly appears only in the *Enquiry*, in the *Treatise*, Hume's "knave" receives different treatment.[238] Hume sees our tendency to injustice in the "infirmity of human nature" (T 3.2.7.5; SBN 536). "When we consider any objects at a distance, ...we always give the preference to whatever is in itself preferable" (*ibid.*). Justice is always approved from the general point of view. We do not usually mistake moral judgment in distant circumstances. "But on my nearer approach, those circumstances, which I first over-look'd, begin to appear, and have an influence on my conduct and affection" (*ibid.*). Because of the weakness of human nature, we yield ourselves to the temptation to breach justice.

> This natural infirmity I may very much regret, and I may endeavour, by all possible means, to free myself from it. I may have recourse to study and reflexion within myself; to the advice of friends; to frequent meditation, and repeated resolution: And having experience'd how ineffectual all these are, I may embrace with pleasure any other expedient, by which I may impose a restraint upon myself, and guard against this weakness. (T 3.2.7.5; SBN 536-537)[239]

Therefore, Hume concludes:

> Men are not able radically to cure, either in themselves or others, that narrowness of soul, which makes them prefer the present to the remote. They cannot change their natures. All they can do is to change their situation, and render the observance of justice the immediate interest of

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[238] In this respect, the *Enquiry* and the *Treatise* have a different objective; the former is an explanation of virtue and the latter is an explanation of human nature. But they are compatible.
[239] This may reflect Hume's own attempt and failure as a young man to execute all the duties in *The Whole Duty of Man* (see Mossner, 1980: 34).

> some particular persons, and its violation their more remote. These persons, then, are not only induc'd to observe those rules in their own conduct, but also to constrain others to a like regularity, and inforce the dictates of equity thro' the whole society. (T 3.2.7.6; SBN 537)

Hume shares with Locke the similar idea of government. Its *raison d'etre* is to compensate the imperfection of human beings. But Hume gives a more consistent empirical explanation for the authority of government than Locke; justice derives its authority from the comprehensive interests of society, and the stable life which society provides its people with.[240]

8. Concluding Remarks

We have seen the basic structure of Hume's theory of justice as the development of his theory of perception. He criticises Hobbesian rational consideration and Lockean abstraction as the ground for justice, and replaces it with his theory of convention. Hume finds the only feasible way for individuals to relate in society is through a negative commitment; by not violating others' property, people enter into a relationship with society, from which a new type of human interaction develops in accordance with the rule of justice. A morality of proximate human relationships can still be maintained by sympathy. Hobbesian covenants and Humean conventions serve the same fundamental function: to control the wills of others by morality. Based on human sentiments, Hume's theory of justice reveals a striking parallelism with his theory of causation; Hume denies objectivity to both laws, and alleges them to be products of human psychology. The normative minimal aim of the Humean theory is to vouchsafe stability; custom is at once stability's driving force and its realisation. His theory connects personal and public interest in the system of justice. Hume shows how general interest and self-interest are naturally reinforced in the development of society through justice.

Because of the constructive nature of human perceptions, they create the stable objective world as the stage that enables human communication, on the bases

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[240] This leads to the topic of allegiance to the government, which will be discussed in Chapter 8.

of which, society is created, pivoting on property. Humean justice is founded on the general point of view that sees oneself and others as particulars in the same convention. In this way, the general point of view represents the comprehensive principle of Humean justice and morality.

Chapter Eight:

Promise and the Allegiance to the Government

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed the first of the three laws of Humean justice: stability of possessions. The formation of the concept of justice is decisive for the formation of society, because with the belief in justice human beings acquire a new mode of behaviour that is unknown in nature. The concept of justice accompanies the concept of rights, as well as the general practice of abiding by the rules of justice from moral motivation. However, the stability of property is only the first step of Hume's system of justice. In this chapter, I will explore how the first law of justice is followed by the second law, the transference of property, then by the third law, the performance of promise. These are derived by necessity from the first law of justice. Among them, Hume's theory of promise is particularly significant. This is because Hobbes and Locke, though in different ways, invoked promise as a means of establishing and legitimising government. Hobbes and Locke resort to covenant or contract for explaining the foundation of government, assuming them to be fundamental laws. Hume's theory of promise inevitably implies a challenge to his two predecessors, especially to Locke whose theory is typically recognised as a social contract theory. This chapter, therefore, attempts to clarify the concept of promise with its critical implication for social contract theory, in relation to the epistemology of Hume that we have discussed so far.

I first outline Hume's overall opinion of the social contract in his "Of Original Contract" to assess Hume's general position on the problems regarding promise and government. Then, I explain the second law of justice, the transference of property by consent as a preliminary step for Hume's theory of promise. I argue that the performance of promise is as artificial virtue that binds people's behaviour. This chapter clarifies that government is also a "composition" (T 3.2.8.8; SBN 539)

of human nature in a similar sense as the external body, the belief in which is crucial for stabilising our life. Government is sustained by the virtue of allegiance. I argue that allegiance to government is founded on the same mechanism as our belief in the existence of the external body, which signifies that government consists in the general point of view.

1. "Of Original Contract"

Modern social contract theories played a significant role in justifying the establishment of government and the obligation of the people to obey the government. Ever since Jeremy Bentham referred to Hume to attack social contract theory together with the natural law tradition as its background, Hume has been known as a critic of social contract theories.[241] There is no doubt that Hume regards social contract theory as a major target of his criticism. Hume's position on the social contract theory is clearly developed in his "Of the Original Contract". Though he is critical of the social contract theory, he does not simply deny the social contract theory. Hume shows an understanding of what the theory might offer a theory of political society. He shares a motivation with the social contract thinkers to explain the origin of government, and also the obligation to submit to the government. Upon the evaluation of the significance of social contract theory, Hume attempts to replace it with his own. Hume specifically has in mind the Lockean social contract theory. Hume acknowledges that

> When we consider how nearly equal all men are in their bodily force, and even in their mental powers and faculties, till cultivated by education; we must necessarily allow, that nothing but their own consent could, at first, associate them together, and subject them to any authority. The people, if we trace government to its first origin in the woods and deserts, are the source of all power and jurisdiction, and voluntarily, for the sake of peace and order, abandoned their native liberty, and received laws from their equal and

[241] Bentham says, "this chimaera (the Original Contract) had been effectively demolished by Mr. Hume. I think we hear not so much of it now as formerly" (Bentham, 1988: 51). Standard commentary assumes this understanding (cf. Plamenatz, 1963: 98, 332).

> companion. The conditions, upon which they were willing to submit, were either expressed, or were so clear and obvious, that it might well be esteemed superfluous to express them. If this, then, be meant by the original contract, it cannot be denied, that all government is, at first, founded on a contract, and that the most ancient rude combinations of mankind were formed chiefly by that principle. (*Essay-OC*, 467-68)

Hume agrees that given the natural equality of human capacities, consent is the only means to create one authority at least in the initial establishment of any government. No one person can rule many others by his physical power. But Hume denies that consent is the only justification of the rule of government in the more mature stage. If consent is the sole ground for submission, people are allowed to abandon the authority by their will as well. Therefore, the social contract theory justifies a right to resist when the sovereign fails to implement the contract. Hume shows the absurdity of social contract theory by pointing out that such a practice is not widely observed in the world (Cf. *Essay-OC*, 469-70). Many princes regard their subjects as their property and their own sovereignty as independent of their subjects. Most people do not care about the origin of their government. Common people acknowledge the authority of their government only because of the fact that their ancestors had obeyed the government for generations. Even if there was an original contract, it does not bind the later generations. Considering past practices of establishing a new government in history, it is obvious that the force to demolish the old government gives birth to almost any government. In those cases people are forced to obey the new government (Cf. *Essay-OC*, 474).

If consent is made by force, it is natural that the consent will lose its power once the force is removed. Hume argues that mere formal consent is not enough unless it is supported by some spontaneous principle. Therefore, what really matters is not the consent itself, but that which makes the consent enduring. Hume's enquiry is directed to the conditions under which meaningful consent is made. The Lockean ground for making consent the only and sufficient condition for obedience to government can be found in his individualism (cf. Grant, 1988). Because people are naturally free, independent, and equal, only their consent can make them subject to an authority other than themselves. And, if they consent freely, there is no other

means for the government to control them. Hobbes thinks that a covenant by force or under threat is valid. Locke answers that because human beings are free, they cannot give consent by force.

However, the problem with Locke's theory is that it does not explain the obligations of later generations who are not involved in the original contract. To this possible criticism, Locke presents a "tacit consent" theory, which means that living under the rule of the government is itself the evidence that the person gives a tacit consent to that government. However, tacit consent is a contradictory concept because consent lies in its explicitness. Hume thinks this compromised form of social contract cannot be justified unless the choice is realistically practicable. It is well known that Hume says,

> Can we seriously say, that a poor peasant or artisan has a free choice to leave his country, when he knows no foreign language or manners, and lives from day to day, by the small wages which he acquires? We may as well assert, that a man, by remaining in a vessel, freely consents to the dominion of the master; though he was carried on board while asleep. And must leap into the ocean, and perish, the moment he leaves her. (*Essay-OC*, 475)

Hume likens the British Isle to a ship which people got on board while sleeping. Consent can be a ground for a legitimate government only if people can disobey government whenever they do not like it. As most people do not have a privilege to leave freely, simply living there does not mean they are willing to obey the government. Hume also points out that people are placed under the governance of their prince even if they leave their home country, as the Pilgrim fathers did, which indicates that the foundation of political legitimacy lies outside of consent, explicit or otherwise. Where, then, does the legitimacy come from? Hume makes it very clear that both the obligation to allegiance and the obligation to fidelity owe to "the general interests or necessities of society".

> If the reason be asked of that obedience, which we are bound to pay to government, I readily answer, *because society could not*

> *otherwise subsist*: And this answer is clear and intelligent to all man kind. Your answer is, *because we should keep our word.* But besides, that no body, till trained in a philosophical system, can either comprehend or relish this answer: Besides this, I say, you find yourself embarrassed, when it is asked, *why we are bound to keep our word?* Nor can you give any answer, but what would, immediately, without any circuit, have accounted for our obligation to allegiance. (*Essay-OC*, 481)

In this passage Hume reveals the crucial connection between the obedience to government and keeping a promise. Hume sees the defect of the social contract theory not so much as consisting in a fiction of the original contract, but more as an insufficient explanation of the nature of promise. Without understanding promise, we cannot understand obedience. More importantly, Hume's theory is not directly addressing the problems which arise when we should resist a despotic government. These arguments cannot be made sensible unless the nature of government, obedience and promise are clarified. Hume considers that the social contract theory rests on an obscure foundation regarding these significant concepts. Social contract theories regard these concepts as rational, but in fact they only take them for granted, which is the cause of absurdity.

> in all questions with regard to morals, as well as criticism, there is really no other standard, by which any controversy can ever be decided. And nothing is a clearer proof, that a theory of this kind is erroneous, than to find, that it leads to paradoxes, repugnant to the common sentiments of mankind, and to the practice and opinion of all nations and all stages. (*Essay-OC*, 486)

Thus, Hume recognises the importance of clarifying the moral concept and the standard of morality. He distinguishes the moral fact that we should obey government from the problem about which government is more desirable. The latter decision does not annihilate the former fact. Moral norms in the final instance should be clear and accessible to "all mankind". Hume's philosophy is permeated by this attitude. The general interest of society is inseparably connected to the duty of obedience, and produces both the duty of obedience, and promise keeping. Where

there is no duty of obedience, there is no duty of promise. Therefore, it is in vain to ascribe the former to the latter.

> The general obligation, which binds us to government, is the interests and necessities of society, and this obligation is very strong. The determination of it to this or that particular prince or form of government is frequently more uncertain and dubious. Present possession has considerable authority in these cases, and greater than in private property; because of the disorders which attend all revolutions and changes of government. (*Essay-OC*, 486)

Hume clearly finds the largest chance of social improvement in safe "commerce". Hume finds it extraordinary to assert "*that the supreme power in a state cannot take from any man, by taxes and impositions, any part of his property, without his own consent or that of his representatives*" (*Essay-OC* italics Hume, 487). This is anything but the general opinion of mankind. What matters for Hume is how the consistent and moral explanation of social interest and necessity which produces the justice of promise can be possible. In his discussion of promise, Hume clarifies the mistake of the social contract theory together with the mistake of the theory of individualism.

2. Relation to the Preceding Laws of Justice

We have seen above that Hobbes and Locke arrive at different destinations in accordance with the difference of their initial premises. Hume presents a theory that fosters the ongoing development of commercial society, free both from the Hobbesian fear of anarchy and from the Lockean fear of despotism. Regarding the concept of promise, Hume argues Hobbes and Locke do not explain the concept of promise itself, and why promise has a moral power, without which covenant or compact does not make sense. Hume says,

> *that a promise wou'd not be intelligible, before human conventions had establish'd it; and that even if it were intelligible, it wou'd not be*

> *attended with any moral obligation.* (T 3.2.5.1; SBN 516, italics Hume)

Both Hobbes and Locke have a provisional answer to this question. But both answers are insufficient for understanding the whole implications of the concept. The Hobbesian covenant falls short of a promise that regulates the personal relationship between individuals. Hobbes's covenant is a once and for all determination; people surrender their natural rights to their common sovereign. The performance of promise in Hobbes is controlled through the fear of authority. But this is not a Humean promise that serves to create a cooperative behaviour of people. Hobbes does not regard promise as initiating from individual rationality because his methodological individualism cannot explain the common framework based on anything other than individual wills.

Locke understands that the binding force of a promise is morality which derives from no particular cause in reality. He grounds the moral obligation to keep promises in natural law; people must keep promises because it is a moral duty set ultimately by the will of God. Locke resorts to the notion of contract in order to establish a bilateral relationship between government and people. He considers promise to be the requirement of moral beings.[242] Locke's theory focuses on the relationship between government and people; he does not explain the principle of regulating private relationships among ordinary citizens. This is also reflected in the individualistic picture of human beings who work alone on nature rather than in cooperation with other people.

Hume's innovation is to explain promise from non-moral premises by his evolutionary approach. He introduces promise as the third law of justice after the first two rules of justice; the stabilisation of property, and the transfer of property through consent. Hume is very aware of the fact that nothing can exist independently except in relation to its proceeding conditions. This also applies to promise. The

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[242] Locke excludes atheists and Catholics from tolerance on the ground that they would not keep promise that should be made before God (Locke,1983). For a more detailed explanation, see (e. g. Riley, 1974; Tully, 1993: 47-62).

system of promise does not exist independently but is created in reaction to the situation that necessitates it.

Obviously, promise does not make sense without the situation in which it is serviceable to human beings. Thus, Hume traces the origin of promise to the natural state before justice to understand what situation requires the system of promise. Historical and evolutionary considerations make it all too clear that human beings cannot be independent. First, no one can be born to oneself, nor can one sustain one's own life by oneself into adulthood. This is enough evidence to indicate that the Hobbesian picture of the independent individual is impossible (though Hobbes indeed demonstrates the impossibility). It is also evident that human beings are neither free nor equal by nature other than in moral terms, as Locke asserts. For Hume, however, the concepts of freedom or equality can be produced in a highly sophisticated social stage only after human beings obtain the system of justice.

As we have seen in the last chapter, it is not arbitrary that the first law of justice is the stability of possessions, because, in the primitive stage of human development, the cause of conflicts can only be concrete objects. The artificial virtue of justice unites society by a new kind of relationship, which is not based on perceptible effects. Paradoxically, this is how human beings can become concerned with the whole society despite their natural limitations, psychological as well as physical. Justice creates a new type of mutuality among people. Mutuality develops necessarily because it is essential for sustaining a social life. This necessity is also based on physical limitation. It is a simple fact that human beings cannot bring with themselves everything they need for their survival, though Locke might say they are given the whole earth. People seek for a solution to this difficulty, which leads to the next development of the law of justice.

3. "Of the Transference of Property by Consent"

The second law of the transference of property by consent links the first law of the stability of possessions and the third law of promise keeping. Although Hume's dealing with this second law is quite terse, a mere three pages, it contains, behind its plain surface, the explanation of a crucial step for preparing the convention of

promise. First, property is understood as a mysterious power in that the same object exerts a totally different power depending on whether one is its owner or not. This reflects Hume's understanding of morality as founded on causation. Justice is a particularly human mode of causation. Let us take an example. I can do anything with my watch as its possessor. But this same watch, left on a table, can devastate your entire life if only you put it into your "pocket". A still more surprising mystery can happen. The same act of your putting the same watch into your pocket will not harm you at all, but only add to your property, only if you heard some moments before the action, my voice saying "I give that watch to you". Let us share Hume's surprise that this phenomenon is totally incomprehensible in terms of natural causation. There is something needed to fill the gap.[243]

Hume constantly appeals to the principle that every phenomenon can be explained as a causal reaction. The rule of the transfer of property by consent emerges as a reaction to the rule of the stability of possessions. As we have seen in the last chapter, Hume stipulates five rules for deciding property. The central principle, a criticism of the Aristotelian principle, is that property should not be decided based on any desert or merit of the person. Though this brings stability, it is accompanied by an inconvenience that the resulting *de facto* distribution of goods is too much dependent on chances, which must cause gross inconveniences. It is not until man confronts this inconvenience that man finds some way of modifying the initial allocation of property. It is wrong to suppose that people demand the proper distribution of things before finding some inconveniences in their present possession of property. Properties cannot be kept fixed in any form; the needs of property reflect the ever-changing situation of human beings. A "Remedy" to this inconvenience is sought after. Violence is the worst option. The next strategy, however, commends itself. It reads:

> possession and property shou'd always be stable, except when the proprietor agrees to bestow them on some other person. This rule can have no ill consequence, in occasioning wars and dissentions; since

[243] Hume's "Of Miracles" (EHU 10; SBN 109f.) has proved this theoretical intention.

> the proprietor's consent, who alone is concern'd, is taken alone in the alienation: And it may serve to many good purposes in adjusting property to persons. Different parts of earth produce different commodities; and not only so, but different men both are by nature fitted for different employments, and attain to greater perfection in any one, when they confine themselves to it alone. All this requires a mutual exchange and commerce; for which reason the translation of property by consent is founded on a law of nature, as well as its stability without such a consent. (T 3.2.4.1; SBN 514)

This is the second law of justice in Hume. In this way, the redistribution of property at once explains the origin of commerce and the division of labour. Through these, property can most effectively be redistributed in accordance with present needs. Hume describes the natural emergence of the relevant concept regarding the redistribution of property. Consent is established, suited to its size, as a means for redistributing goods based on individual requirments. It serves as a cause for people's property to circulate in society. Consent is the only way of changing a once fixed property relationship and therefore, the most convenient way of redistribution.

Most significant of all, consent "can have no ill consequence" (T 3.2.4.1; SBN 514), because consent guarantees the peaceful redistribution of property among people. However, unlike Locke, Humean consent is not the primary ground of justice; its function is confined to the distribution of property based on the needs and desires of individuals. Moreover, Humean consent differs from Lockean consent because it does not represent the natural right prescribed in natural law. In other words, consent is valid not because of the absolute rights of individuals, but because of convention. As with the rule for the stability of property, consent is based on convention, which represents its validity and its binding force.

Hume clearly aims to replace the Lockean term of "consent" that is considered to originate from the right of individuals.[244] The consent of the

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[244] This is Hume's basic strategy. It is obviously his strategy to confer different meaning to the same term. Remember he takes the same strategy in the discussion of sympathy; he transformed the term of "pride" or "humility" into a totally different meaning. And the most significant differentiation of the meaning occurs in his use of the word "natural (T 3.1.2.10; SBN 475)". He

individuals is socially acknowledged as a means for adjusting property ownership, and there is no Lockean inalienable right involved in consent. Consent is based on the convention of society regarding the transference of property. However, consent is conferred with a strong moral power because of the absolute necessity for avoiding conflict and sustaining individual life, when it is established as the law of justice. This rule is absolute because the redistribution of goods is impossible without this rule, and without redistribution, society would soon collapse.

There is another sense in which the second law of justice serves to produce another significant concept for the formation of society, which is "mutuality". In the first law of the stability of property, property emerges as the result of each person's concentrating on his own possessions. At this stage, no mutuality as social interaction has emerged. First in this second law of justice individuals enter into mutuality through the exchange of their possessions, as distributors of their property. This is the initial sense of mutuality. Thus, individuals are involved in mutual relationships with other people through exchanging their property, and strengthening mutual dependency and social order. Consent is a vehicle for producing mutuality. In this way, Hume has radically transformed the concept of consent from the Lockean means for legitimatization to the means for developing human relation.[245] This further prepares the way for positing the last law of justice, promise-keeping.

4. Promise as the Completion of the Laws of Justice

The third law of justice, the performance of promise, is founded upon the second law, transference by consent. In order to demonstrate its artificiality, Hume resorts to a similar argument to that in his discussion of the stability of possessions. If promise is shown to be based on convention, it no longer can be the ultimate justification of government (cf. Miller, 1981: 81). Hume points out why keeping promises is an artificial virtue. He asserts

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changes the traditional meaning of the word of "natural" as eternal or unchangeable into a causal concept, depending on which theory he has developed.

> that a promise is not intelligible naturally, nor antecedent to human conventions; and that a man, unacquainted with society, could never enter into any engagements with another, even tho' they could perceive each other's thoughts by intuition (T 3.2.5.2; SBN 516).

Hume confirms the above passage by asserting that there is no "faculty of soul" that produces promise. Though promise is issued by the agent to commit himself to a future action, neither "resolution", nor "desire", nor "willing" assigns him any obligation. This is the fundamental point of Hume's theory of promise. Underneath this argument lies his theory of causation; no present perception guarantees a future event. Likewise, no one can produce a moral relation as promise by himself. Thus it is arguable that Hume's theory of promise is elucidated by the same argument that he used to explain causation. The core argument of Hume's theory of promise is to explain how it is that the present contract is causally connected with future action. Hume recognizes the defect of the social contract theory in this respect. Thus it is now clear that the real purport of Hume's theory of causation is a criticism of the social contract theory. This is related to the basic tenet of his moral perception. According to Hume,

> All morality depends upon our sentiments; and when any action, or quality of the mind, pleases us *after a certain manner*, we say it is virtuous; and when the neglect, or non-performance of it, displeases us *after a like manner*, we say that we lie under an obligation to perform it. ... [We cannot] render any action agreeable or disagreeable, moral or immoral; which, without that act, wou'd have produced contrary impressions, or have been endow'd with different qualities. (T 3.2.5.4; SBN 517)

Hume clarifies the mysterious character of promise. Promise is like a magical formula that changes people's behaviour. Hume emphasises that as it cannot possibly be created by any working of the mind of a single person, it must be derived from something beyond the individual will. Shown in his explanation of the stability of property, there must be a natural motivation for an action to become a moral

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[245] For a Lockean meaning of consent, see, e.g., Dunn, 1967: 153-82.

obligation; in the case of natural virtues, moral norms are derived from pleasant or useful tendencies of human action that are established as a custom. Hume takes the examples of relieving the miserable, and of a father taking care of his children (Cf. T 3.2.1.5; SBN 478). For those moral obligations, there are corresponding natural inclinations that urge us to take some action whose negligence means a deficit of natural sentiments of humanity.[246] Unlike these natural virtues that are accompanied by a natural inclination, however,

> there is naturally no inclination to observe promises, distinct from a sense of their obligation; it follows, that fidelity is no natural virtue, and that promises have no force, antecedent to human conventions. (T 3.2.5.6; SBN 519)

This is the evidence for the artificiality of the third law of justice; "promises are human inventions, founded on the necessities and interests of society" (T 3.2.5.7; *ibid.*). As a promise cannot exist without other laws of justice, it cannot be the original foundation of society. Independent individuals cannot resort to the system of promise in order to form a society. In this way, Hume denies the function of promise in establishing a political society. But this negative argument is followed by a positive theory about promise. Hume fully acknowledges the essential function of promise in society.

It is important to understand how promise follows the first two rules of justice. By the first law of justice, Hume explained the stability of society and the creation of property. This is a foundation for creating independent individuals who work on their own with a favourable indifference to others. But this is not enough for their survival, and they establish the second law of nature to transfer each other's property by consent, which is the first step toward the mutual commitment of the individuals. The transference of property, however, turns out not to be enough for implementing mutual cooperation.

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[246] Apparently, Hume considers the paradigm of "natural virtue" to be found among animals. The rivalry with Descartes thesis is obvious in his "Of the pride and humility of animals" (T 2.1.12; SBN 324f.).

> The *transference* of property, which is the proper remedy for this inconvenience, cannot remedy it entirely; because it can only take place with regard to such objects as are *present* and *individual*, but not to such as are absent or general (T 3.2.5.8; SBN 520).

Though transference of property by consent is known to be to mutual advantage, it is not always easy to practice, mostly because of physical limitations. Distant property, like "a particular house, twenty leagues distant", or a general thing, like "ten bushels of corn", cannot be transferred. More serious cases, however, apply to "services and actions, which we may exchange to our mutual interest and advantage" (T 3.2.5.8; SBN 520). Hume describes the quandary in a superbly succinct manner:

> Now as it frequently happens, that these mutual performances cannot be finish'd at the same instance, 'tis necessary, that one party be contented to remain in uncertainty, and depend upon the gratitude of the other for a return of kindness. But so much corruption is there among men, that, generally speaking, this becomes but a slender security; and as the benefactor is here suppos'd to bestow his favours with a view to self-interest, this both takes off from the obligation, and sets an example of selfishness, which is the true mother of ingratitude. Were we, therefore, to follow the natural course of our passions and inclinations, we shou'd perform but few actions for the advantage of others, from disinterested views; because we are naturally very limited in our kindness and affection: And we shou'd perform as few of that kind, out of a regard to interest; because we cannot depend upon their gratitude. Here then is the mutual commerce of good offices in a manner lost among mankind, and every one reduc'd to his own skill and industry for his well-being and subsistence (T 3.2.5.8; SBN 519-520).

Hume is aware that people will not often consent to sacrifice their personal interest for the sake of others or the public. It is easy to see that Hume has in mind the Hobbesian quandary of being unable to rely on others' gratitude or voluntary

kindness for mutual interest.[247] As everyone loves themselves more than others, kindness to others is naturally overwhelmed by self-interest. Thus, it is contradictory to human nature to rely on the voluntary kindness of others to attain one's own self-interest, though mutual cooperation is necessary for self-interest. The latter is desired from the general point of view. The solution to the problem is to secure cooperation by the sanction of self-interest: by using a certain form of words, a man "subjects himself to the penalty of never being trusted again in case of failure" (T 3.2.5.10; SBN 522). This is the initiation of the moral system of promise. In this way, people make use of promise, which allows us to act relying on the will of others, sanctioned by the whole spectrum of morality from legal systems to a mere dislike.

Unlike the Hobbesian quandary of complete isolation, people have already attained the crucial first two steps of justice. The last problem is how to extend the positive act of mutuality that brings such a huge benefit to each by their non-simultaneous cooperation. Promise is an artificial assurance to bind the future action of a person, which is by definition beyond the reach of any other person. As in the first and the second law of justice, the rule of keeping promise is founded on convention. At this stage, it is not difficult for people to perform the promise, because they have already acquired the first and the second laws of justice of attaining self-interest through mutuality. Performing promises assumes a stronger moral force in accordance with its utility for the interest of society. The rule of keeping promises develops from the second rule of the transference of property; it is a transference of future action by consent. If the first and the second law of justice are concerned with the spatial distribution of human goods, the third law of justice is concerned with the temporal distribution of human goods that include future behaviour. Hume's explanation demands no impracticable performance like the Hobbesian renouncement of rights. Like other laws of justice, promise is a way to achieve stable self-interest in a cooperative scheme, i.e. relying on the future behaviour of other people. Because the morality of promise is based on interest in

[247] The famous formulation is the prisoner's dilemma. For a discussion, see, e.g., Blackburn, 1998a: Ch. 6.

self and others, it can easily prevail. Then performing promise becomes a strong obligation, as it is natural to "every mortal" (T 3.2.5.11; SBN 522).

> All they [moralists and politicians] can pretend to, is, to give a new direction to those natural passions, and teach us that we can better satisfy our appetites in an oblique and artificial manner, than by their headlong and impetuous motion. Hence I learn to do a service to another, without bearing him any real kindness; because I forsee, that he will return my service, in expectation of another of the same kind, and in order to maintain the same correspondence of good offices with me or with others. (T 3.2.5.9; SBN 521)

Hume points out another important feature of promise; the validity of promise does not depend on the hidden intention of the promiser; even if the promiser has "an intention of deceiving us", we are still "bound by his expression or verbal promise, if we accept it" (T 3.2.5.13; SBN 524). This is concerned with the ultimate authority of promise. It is significant to notice that this is understood as Hume's phenomenalism of morality as a criticism of the Lockean concept of person as a moral substance whose "intention" endorses the promise.[248] Promise depends only on a formal feature of wording. This is why promise can share public validity, as in making a private will public. Therefore, it is possible to understand that Hume replaces the moral intention of the person with the public endorsement, as the ground of morality and the validity of promise. Promise assumes a force not because of the will of the promiser, but owning to the convention publicly established. Through promise, a new type of human causation is introduced; our personal intention regarding our future actions, expressed in promise, are assumed to be quasi-facts. In fact, as Hume establishes in his theory of external objects, this signifies the human meaning of "fact".

Hume thus treats promise as causation.[249] Like the other two rules of justice, the promise is an artificial causation that exerts the same power as in the way

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[248] This is the implication of his theory of the external body (see chapter 4).
[249] The causation that he discusses in Book 1 should be understood in exactly the same manner (see Chapter 3).

physical objects cause human behaviour. A promise, though it is physically a mere "voice" or "ink", exerts causal power by producing certain beliefs in the people concerned. Promises move people through their belief that breach will cause sanction. Promisees have to arrange their future behaviour on the condition, expressed by the promisers. The words of the promiser function just like any other belief in physical reality. Promises set the framework for people's behaviour. Just as we walk on solid ground and avoid cliffs, we plan our future behaviour taking the events predicted by promise as quasi-facts. The artificial causation of promises is no different from natural causation of objects as both influence human beings through their beliefs. Promise-breaking infringes upon all behaviours within the framework of justice. Hume compares promise to "*transubstantiation*" or *"holy orders*" (T 3.2.5.14; SBN 524) impressed that what is no more than "being mere sound" (T 3.2.5.14; SBN 525), the vibration of the air, exerts such a physical force.[250] Unlike the Lockean idea, the moral power of promise does not derive its authority from "heaven". Promise is a clear, non-mysterious prediction of future behaviour of other people. Besides that, each party has a liberty to serve his own interest on the assumption of the promise. In this way, people begin to make many arrangements to meet the new situation and to increase individual interests.

Once the obligation to keep promises is established as a promise of justice, it exerts a dramatically expanding force in society for producing new relations. This formative power of promise has to do with its formality. As the law of justice is restricted to performing promises, promises can be made regardless of their content about whatever arrangement two parties are ready to consent on. Performing promises is a final development of the laws of justice in that it can stipulate any law including the first law of non-violation of other's possessions. In this sense, promises accomplish the first and second laws of justice. This has led the theorists of the social contract to mistake it to be the first law of justice rather than a subsequent, emergent law. Such is the convenience and power of promises that eventually people organise every social arrangement through promises as a system of law.

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[250] Hume apparently obtains this idea from Hobbes (cf. *Leviathan* 117).

Once human activities start to be carried out through the system of promise, it is impossible to get rid of the system; the contents of the rule can be changed but the manner of acting by such rules cannot be obliterated other than at the cost of complete social disintegration. As with the most fundamental conventions like language, keeping promises is *sine qua non* for sustaining society. Hume says that "it is impossible for men so much as to murder each other without statues, and maxims, and an idea of justice and honour" (EPM 4.20; SBN 210). This reflects the fundamentally conventional nature of human behaviour.

Just as it is in "the selfishness and confined generosity of men and the scarce provision nature has made for his wants" that justice derives its origin, so the origin of promise derives from the desire for compensating insufficient property with the combined effect of selfishness and the limited generosity. These inconveniences are set by nature. But they can bring invaluable pleasure and infinite wealth to human society in the end. Thus Hume's theory of justice explains the basic structure of social order in its full shape in both *spatial* and *temporal* dimensions.

5. The Origin of the Government as the Perfection of Justice

Hume's account of the establishment of government is founded on his theory of justice. A central characteristic of Hume's theory of justice is that Hume separates the origin of justice from morality. Society without government is logically possible because convention is more fundamental as the bond of society than government. However, this does not of course mean that government is redundant. Hume's task is to explain the emergence of government. On the other hand, Hume clearly holds that government is impossible without society. In this respect, Hume denies the Hobbesian theory in favour of the Lockean theory about government. Locke considers that government compensates for the imperfection of human beings; because of imperfection, human beings cannot realise the prescription of natural law. Thus, according to Locke, there are four major tasks of the government; to enact laws, to judge cases, to administrate the law and judgement, and to deal with foreign affairs.

While Locke recognises the origin of government in the imperfection of human beings, Hume does not take the moral weakness of human beings as imperfection. It rightly represents the actual mechanism of human psychology, "that men are mightily govern'd by the imagination, and proportion their affections more to the light, under which any object appears to them, than to its real and intrinsic value" (T 3.2.7.1; SBN 534). Even though the system of justice is known to procure the general interest, justice requires the renouncement of one's direct pursuit of self-interest. On the other hand, the benefit by breaching justice is specific and particular. Although the particular benefit is much smaller than the general interest, it has a more vivid influence on individual behaviour.

> This is the reason why men so often act in contradiction to their known interest; and in particular why they prefer any trivial advantage, that is present, to the maintenance of order in society, which so much depends on the observance of justice. The consequences of every breach of equity seem to lie very remote, and are not able to counter-ballance any immediate advantage, that may be reap'd from it. (T 3.2.7.3; SBN 535)

Because of the weakness of human beings, they tend to choose the particular, but smaller interest rather than justice. "You have the same propension, that I have, in favour of what is contiguous above what is remote" (T 3.2.7.3; SBN 535). The imitative tendency of human nature provides a further reason to breach justice, because to abide by justice among other people ignoring it makes us "the cully of my integrity" (*ibid.*). Injustice is wrong not because it is contradictory, as in Kant, but because it destroys the fabric of convention and causes dysfunction to the system of justice. However, Hume asserts that the weakness holds at the same time the remedy, because

> When we consider any objects at a distance, all their minute distinctions vanish, and we always give the preference to whatever is in itself preferable, without considering its situation and circumstances . . . My distance from the final determination makes all those minute

> difference vanish, nor am I affected by any thing, but the general and more discernable qualities of good and evil (T 3.2.7.5; SBN 536).

It is evident that this explanation implies the general point of view as a means for seeking for what is preferable in itself, correcting our immediate judgements. Therefore, justice is reflected in the general point of view. As we have seen, justice is involved in coordinating the interests of the individuals. Justice will not perish, even if it contradicts individual interest, as long as people deal with their interest in sustainable human relationships. Hume's moral principle identifies a concrete means to realise it. Therefore, the requirement of justice clarifies a concrete procedure for securing its observation. Thus Hume finds the origin of government in the imperfection of the system of justice. As the initial incident for establishing government, Hume cites "quarrels … among different societies" (T 3.2.8.1; SBN 540). In conflicts with other societies, society in warfare needs a specific leader who administrates justice, otherwise the society will immediately collapse.[251] The personality of the administrator does not matter compared to his role of perceiving the observance of justice as in his own interests.

> These are persons, whom we call civil magistrates, kings and their ministers, our governors and rulers, who being indifferent persons to the greatest part of the state, have no interest, or but a remote one, in any act of injustice; and being satisfied with their present condition, and with their part in society, have an immediate interest in every execution of justice, which is so necessary to the upholding of society. Here then is the origin of civil government and allegiance (T 3.2.7.6; SBN 537).

Government, once established, assumes the authority of settling all disputes about justice. The benefit of government reaches further than that. Governments, by all means, "force them [people] to seek their own advantage, by a concurrence in some common end or purpose" (T 3.2.7.8; SBN 538). The activities of government

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[251] Again, this is Hume's rephrasing of the Lockean assertion that consent is necessary to subject oneself to a specific political authority in society (cf. Riley, 1976: 136-145).

achieve the cooperation of people. Government has the physical capacity of enabling people to engage in joint projects with a multitude of others. The system of promise can have two neighbours "agree to drain a meadow" (*ibid.*). But promise cannot have a thousand people concert and execute so complicated a design, because "each seeks a pretext to free himself of the trouble and expense, and would lay the whole burden on others" (*ibid.*). Government extends the positive function of promise by representing the multitudes of people. Therefore, only government embodies the general point of view, and morality in its entire scale.

> Thus bridges are built; harbours opend'd; ramparts rais'd; canals form'd; fleets equip'd; and armies disciplin'd; every where, by the care of government, which, tho' compos'd of men subject to all human infirmities, becomes, by one of the finest and most subtle inventions imaginable, a composition, that is, in some measure, exempted from all these infirmities. (T 3.2.7.8; SBN 539)

In this way, Hume explains the establishment of government without resorting to the concept of contract. Unlike the government prescribed by Hobbes and Locke, Humean government is thought to produce unknown public interests. It is crucial to notice that though the products of those interests are all perceivable, government itself as the cause of these tangible interests is not at all directly perceivable.[252] There is no such substance as government. Hume calls government "one of the finest and most subtle inventions, imaginable, a composition" (T 3.2.7.8; SBN 539). Government exists only as a "function": something that embodies justice that consists in the general interest. In this sense, the principle of government is the general point of view. Humean government is established as the development of the system of justice; it is required to sanction the system of justice. Unlike Hobbes, government does not particularly aim to protect the life of people, and unlike Locke, it does not particularly aim to protect the property of people. Humean government

[252] Let us remember that Hume includes "government", in a somewhat clumsy manner at that point in the *Treatise* (T 1.1.7.14; SBN 23) as one of the examples of "abstract ideas". Now Hume's underlying consistency is clear.

realises stability and promotes the interest of society that, more concretely, is power, ability, and security.

As Hume's theory of government is not founded on any contract, it has a different objective from the contractarian theories. Hume's government is established as the natural development of convention and has a role in sustaining the order prescribed by the system of justice. Hume also gives a different explanation regarding the rules to decide forms of government. In the previous chapter, we have discussed the rules that decide property. Justice regarding the stability of property claims nothing about who should own what. The central point of the concept of justice is that property does not exist as an inherent quality of objects. This is a result of his scepticism about the essence of property; there is no quality in objects that commends itself as the property of any specific possessor. Ownership by specific persons is decided only by convention. It is significant that the same theory applies to the establishment of government.[253]

Hume asserts that "[a]s numerous and civiliz'd society cannot subsist without government, so government is entirely useless without an exact obedience" (T 3.2.10.1; SBN 553-554). The point is that strict obedience is due not to any inherent quality of the government. Obedience is solely a matter of the attitude of the citizens. Government formally requires compliance, but it is the people who realise it. And it is Hume's fundamental theory that the interest of justice lies in this obedience rather than in the government. It does not matter who governs, because people submit themselves not to the sovereign but to the rules of justice. On the contrary, it is the worst political system to rely on the personal capacity of the political authority, precisely because it represents only his particular point of view.[254] In this way, Hume prescribes a theory of government based on the rule of law.[255]

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[253] John Day discusses the similarity between Hume's arguments of property and allegiance. However, he criticises Hume for oversimplifying the title of the government (Day, 1965: 55). "Oversimplification" is the familier criticism Hume receives commonly regarding causation, property and government.

[254] Hume makes this even clearer in "That Politics may be reduced to a Science" in *Essays*. Spinoza has a similar view (see Spinoza, 1958: 265).

[255] Hume's position is perfectly consistent with his later "That Politics may be reduced to a Science" in *Essays*.

It is very important to understand Hume's theory of government in analogy to the theory of the existence of external bodies. In his theory of the existence of external bodies, Hume shows that external bodies are a requirement of the perceptions of causation --- that multiple perceptions are reduced to the qualities of one object as their common source (cf. Chapter 4). In the same sense, laws of justice, as they in fact arise from convention, are in themselves unstable. When disputes occur, they are easily broken or neglected. In order, therefore, to render them more solid, they are ascribed to one "substance" that supposedly issues the laws, has the authority to implement them. This is the government, as human invention.

The creation of government derives from the convention of people in general, and not from the personal behaviour of the governor. Therefore, the principle for deciding a governor is that it should be in accordance with convention as the natural embodiment of human nature. Hume's rules for explaining the authority of governments are five in number: long possession or "prescription", present possession, conquest as the analogue of "occupation", succession, and positive laws, which derives its force from some of those principles.[256] Just as in the case of the rules of property, these rules are all based on the psychological sense of attachment.

However, Hume by no means thinks that these rules confer strict legitimacy to any government. As the evidence for this, he approves the right of resisting government.[257] The point is that Hume is convinced that the essence of government does not lie in the initial determination of the object of allegiance. The social contract theory mistakes the contract with the magistrate for the obligation of obedience. It is one thing to decide the agent who personifies government and it is another to ascribe an authority to government. To decide an agent is a minor task compared to ascribing authority to government itself, because the former does not make sense without the latter. Hume clarified that governmental function of administrating justice in fact

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[256] David Miller points out that Hume has the events of 1688 in mind in reference to the positive rules, "when a monarch satisfying the replacements of long possession, present possession, and succession was replaced by a parliamentary nominee" (Miller, 1981: 87).

[257] He positively approves of the Glorious Revolution (T 3.2.10.16; SBN 563), which is evidence that he is not a Tory conservative (see Phillipson, 1989: *passim*).

depends on the allegiance of people. The ultimate significance of the virtue of obedience is not influenced by the choice of magistrate or the form of governance. The real danger lies in the contrary claims for the alleged "best" political regime (cf. Phillipson, 1989:51).

6. Allegiance to the Government

The central characteristic of Hume's theory of government is that he employs a Copernican turn to clarify the nature of government. Hume clarifies that the essence of well-functioning government consists in the spontaneous obedience of the people, rather than the force of the sovereign or promises of allegiance. This is a turn from a substance-centred to a relation-centred perspective. P. F. Brownsey alleges that Hume does not succeed in providing legitimate grounds for obeying government. He objects that Hume does not provide any explanation of legitimate political authority. He claims:

> Now as a rule Hume presents his utilitarian argument as a non-contractarian way of establishing a moral obligation to obey government.... Even if the argument succeeds in providing non-contractarian grounds for the obligation to obey, it does not by that fact demonstrate a non-contractarian source of rightful political authority. And it does not refute the claim of contract theory that governments can acquire rightful authority only in consequence of a social contract (Brownsey, 1978: 145).

Because Hume explains the establishment of government in a naturalistic way, he presents a non-contractarian theory for explaining the legitimacy of the government. It is important to notice that Hume's theory about obedience to government is supervened by his theory of justice. Hume finds that the role of government is to take charge of the execution of justice. If the role of government is to compel people to observe the laws of justice, government cannot be sustained by promise. Therefore, Hume supposes a different principle than promise for producing obedience. Thus, Hume recognises "allegiance" as a distinctive virtue. Hume thinks that allegiance is initially grafted to the duty of promise, but in due course it obtains

an original duty and authority independent of the promissory contract. Hume explains that:

> having found that *natural*, as well as *civil* justice, derives its origin from human conventions, we shall quickly perceive, how fruitless it is to resolve the one into other, and seek, in the laws of nature, a stronger foundation for our political duties than interest, and human conventions; while these laws themselves are built on the very same foundation. On which-ever side we turn this subject, we shall find, that these two kinds of duty are exactly on the same footing, and have the same source both of their *first invention* and *moral obligation.* They are contriv'd to remedy like inconveniences, and acquire their moral sanction in the same manner, from their remedying those inconveniences. (T 3.2.8.4; SBN 543)

As we have seen, government not only compensates for the moral weakness of people but *perfects* the system of justice. Therefore, the steady observance of promise is an effect of the institution of government; but that the obedience to government is not an effect of the obligation of a promise. Hume's fundamental view is that allegiance is what makes up the essence of government, rather than government producing allegiance. By observing the mutual interest in government, the convention of obeying government is formed, and people ascribe moral authority to government. The authority becomes stronger as people's interests are served through the system of justice.

Hume's theory of government is conceived in parallel to his theory of belief in the existence of objects. He shows that the most solid belief provided by nature is the belief in an external object. Though it is in fact a fiction, we obtain enormous advantage and freedom by behaving according to the belief in external bodies.[258] In a

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[258] This is a Humean exegesis for Plato's famous parallel between the individual and the state. In the argument of personal identity, Hume already states that he "cannot compare the soul more properly to any thing than to a republic or commonwealth, in which several members are united by the reciprocal ties of government and subordination, and give rise to other persons, who propagate the same republic in the incessant changes of its parts" (T 1.4.6.19; SBN 261). Justice is taken to be a moral characteristic of the state, just as human characteristics are ascribed to a person. Hume shows that the idea of the state and of a person are both fictions. David Miller also notices the imaginative nature of authority. He says the wise man is "one who recognises that

similar manner, belief in government, though it is a human "composition" or "invention", provides people with the advantage and freedom that only a society and a system of justice can provide. Government is not a substance nor does it exist by itself, but is a product of human convention. In this way, Hobbes's theory that the "Leviathan" is a composition of subjects has been converted into Hume's theory of perception; government is composed not by gathering people's rights, but as an object that is supposed into existence by the virtue of allegiance. Humean obedience can be spontaneous because it is based on interest, which naturally contradicts the possibility of despotic government. As Hume says, "a man living under an absolute government, wou'd owe it no allegiance; since, by its very nature, it depends not on consent" (T 3.2.8.9; SBN 549). Thus, to the degree that the general point of view represents the public and establishes and maintains the government, Hume's argument of government provides the empiricist idea of *democratisation* as the identification of the principle of governance with the representation of the governed.[259]

Now it is possible to answer Brownsey's criticism that Hume does not explain legitimate political authority. Hume denies the idea that obedience is based on any justification. As with the explanation of right, Hume would say that it is incorrect to talk of justification before establishing government. The idea of the justification of government implies a rejection of government when it cannot be justified. But it is impossible to choose the judge, outside the established system of justice, who is authorised to announce the final verdict against government. Thus, allegiance is not based on any justification. Government has its root in human conventions that exists prior to justification. Though it is possible to change the form

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there are several criteria for ascribing authority, none of which should necessarily be given precedence over the other. A typical vulgar error, for instance, is to suppose that long possession must always outweigh present possession as a title to power" (Miller, 1981: 91).

[259] Hume's theory of general ideas as the representation by a particular of other particulars serves also as the epistemological basis of political "representation". Although usually Hobbes and Spinoza are credited with initially providing the theory of modern democracy, Hume's theory implies the same basic idea. Balibar describes Spinoza's political theory as a theory of democratisation, which is valid for every regime, instead of a theory of democracy. The same view can be found in Hume, as is evident in his "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth" (*Essays*). See (Balibar, 1998: 121). Douglas J. Den Uyl points out that "although Spinoza is an advocate of

and agency of government, allegiance to government as such must remain if society is to function through a system of justice.

7. The Right to Resist

The theory of allegiance reveals the understanding that underlies Hume's theory of the right to resist. Most fundamentally, the right to resist is not a topic that can positively be included in the theory of government, because there is no foundation in the framework of government to support the right to resist. Hume like Hobbes, aims to present a theory that will discourage it from happening. This is possible because government is not the starting point of his theory of society. Hobbes strongly argues against the right to resist, although he admits that it can be inevitable as a "Naturall Punishments" (*Leviathan* 253); not subjects but nature itself punishes the sovereign.[260] This happens when the sovereign breaches the law of nature despite impeccable obedience on the side of his subjects. The point is that there is no justification on the side of the people for bringing about the resistance. Therefore, people need not be given legitimate reason for the cause of resistance. Resistance takes place in the worst situation called the state of nature, which is outside the range of Hobbes's civil theory. In other words, there is no perspective within the *Leviathan* to comprehend the situation of its own death.[261] However, writing after the Glorious Revolution, Locke and Hume are more realistic about the possibility of resistance to government than Hobbes. Hume admits,

> As matter wou'd have been created in vain, were it depriv'd of a power of resistance, without which no part of it cou'd preserve a distinct existence, and the whole might be crowded up into a single point: So 'tis a gross absurdity to suppose, in any government, a right without a remedy, or allow, that the supreme power is shar'd with the people, without allowing, that 'tis lawful for them to defend their

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democracy, he is not a democratic enthusiast" (Den Uyl, 1983: 162). In this regard, Hume and Spinoza are identical.

[260] In contrast, Locke considers legitimate resistance as an "appeal to Heaven" (Two Treatises 379). In this case, punishment is done by people.

[261] The idea of not knowing one's own death reflects Hobbes's Epicurean and Democritean influence. As the body is composed of atoms, so the commonwealth is composed of individuals.

> share against every invader. Those, therefore, who wou'd seem to respect our free government, and yet deny the right of resistance, have renounc'd all pretensions to common sense, and do not merit a serious answer. (T 3.2.10.16; SBN 564)

In this way, Hume admits, as a matter of "common sense", the right of resistance so that individuals are not deprived of their distinct existence. Hume's intention regarding the discussion of the right of resistance, however, is to criticise the Lockean social contract theory that recognises obedience as a rational behaviour, even though Locke by no means encourages rebellions.[262] Lockean theory is mistaken in the understanding of the concept of "interest". The interest that is met by obedience to government is different from the interest that is served by implementing promise. Hume says,

> And since there is a separate interest in the obedience to government, from that in the performance of promises, we must also allow of a separate obligation. To obey the civil magistrate is requisite to preserve order and concord in society. To perform promises is requisite to beget mutual trust and confidence in the common offices of life. The ends, as well as the means, are perfectly distinct; nor is the one subordinate to the other. (T 3.2.8.5; SBN 544)

The interests of government are general and not particular in that government provides a framework in which people can engage in their business freely without coming into conflict. Like rules of a game where following rules does not directly contribute to a particular player winning, following the rules of justice does not serve particular interests. When the contractarian justifies the resistance to government, his judgement, though alleged to be rational, can only be based on his particular interests, and the individual interest is not what government is meant to promote. It is true that the rules of the game can make the game impossible. Therefore, Hume admits that in extreme cases that resistance is inevitable. The point is, however, it is impossible to mark a clear line beyond which the rebellion will

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[262] For an argument of defending Locke, see Seliger, 1963.

clearly be preferable to the status quo. Hume asserts that "'tis certainly impossible for the laws, or even for philosophy, to establish any *particular* rules, by which we may know when resistance is lawful; and decide all controversies, which may arise on that subject" (T 3.2.10.16; SBN 563). Hume understands that there is no causal guarantee that the removal of the bad government will produce good government. Moreover, it has to be taken into account that resistance may bring with it all the costs described by Hobbes as the state of nature. If the interest of the government is order and stability, it is contradictory, at lease temporarily, to cause the disorder of resistance in order to attain stability. Because the origin of government consists in the secure administration of justice, the fact that people in general observe the rules of justice indicates a functioning government, which is contrary to the resistance to government. Thus, he is reluctant to sanction resistance:

> I must confess, that I shall always incline to their side, who draw the bond of allegiance very close, and consider an infringement of it as the last refuge in desperate cases, when the public is in the highest danger from violence and tyranny. (*Essay-PO*, 490)

One person's physical power is limited, and his life is also limited, so it does not usually happen that people need to overturn the whole system of justice simply because their sovereign is "bad".[263] Most of all, it is absurd to suddenly change a whole system of the government that has lasted many centuries (T 3.2.10.14; SBN 561). It is like proposing to change the national language. Moreover, in a more advanced commercial society, it becomes more difficult for government to conduct policies that are not supported by at lease a majority of people. And even if the government abuses people, there is a better way of overturning it than by violent rebellion. Hume believes in the progress of human society, its ability to organise a moral point of view in the "general course of things" (*Essay-C*, 254).[264] The more commercial society advances, the more the social communication enriches the

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[263] Hume delineates this point in "Of the First Principle of Government" in *Essays*.
[264] Hume says that "it is the chief business of philosophers to regard the general course of things" (*Essay-C*, 254). This represents Hume's fundamental conception of "true philosophy".

general point of view. In a civilised commercial society, civil liberty is better advanced through gradual improvement than through a political revolution.

Hume distinguishes the justification of the reigning government from the justification of the system of justice. In western democratic society, it is no longer necessary to resort to unlawful means to get rid of the presiding government. A government owes its authority to the allegiance of the people, which reflects more accurately the opinion of the people. If the general point of view does not acknowledge the government, it cannot function as government, and naturally collapses. Thus, in any case it is the general point of view rather than the condition of a contract that lets a government stand or fall. In this way, Hume reveals that government is a composition of the general point of view.

8. Concluding Remarks

We have examined Hume's theory of promise in reference to its critical implication to the social contract theory. Hume's criticism is decisive in that he anatomises the concept of promise itself, that the social contract theory finds directly in "heaven". We can now see that the concept of the general point of view first revealed in Hume's epistemology culminates in the establishment of government. This indicates that Hume's *Treatise* as a whole has a goal in establishing a consistent moral and political theory. Furthermore, it is important to recognise that Hume makes a fundamental revision of the Hobbesian and the Lockean political theories.

Hobbes, Locke and Hume all agree that political society is formed as a moral community; it is by means of moral principles that people constitute a society. The focal point of their respective theories is how individuals relate to the community beyond their immediate commitments. Hobbes refers to a sovereign power as the locus of an accumulation of rights of his subjects. But Hobbes's rationalist method of reconstruction confers on a single person absolute power, which can produce despotism. Most of all, his negative argument for avoiding the worst situation is incapable of explaining the natural formation of the moral institutions participated in by people in general. Locke's social contract theory separates the justification of government from the explanation of the standard of

justice. The relationship of the system of governance with the justification of the presiding government is not explained.

It is now possible to see that Hume offers a consistent theory of society that consists in the interest of the general public in stability. The key lies in the formation of the beliefs in justice and government. These beliefs are modelled on the beliefs in causation and in external object. His theory of government is founded upon his epistemology. In this way, he provides his moral and political theory with the most valid foundation of nature. Hume's *Treatise* aims to understand the whole process of human nature through which people establish morality and political society. It is possible to recognise the general point of view as consistently leading the development of Hume's project, and serving as a normative concept in the final instance.

Conclusion

Introduction

We have seen in the previous Chapters the development of Hume's theory of perceptions, starting from merely particular perceptions which eventuate in the perception of political authority as the guarantee of the order and stability of human life. I have attempted to establish that the general point of view is the fundamental principle in the creation of order and stability. In this concluding Chapter, I wish to conduct two things. In section 1, in order to further convince the reader of my originality, I contrast my reading with other commentators whose work shares a fundamental intention of showing the consistency of the *Treatise* to highlight what is distinctive about my argument. In section 2, I offer a final general statement with further evidence on the concept of general point of view.

1. Review of other Commentators

I take up the arguments of three renowned commentators: Pall Ardal, Annette Baier, and Donald Livingston. Their works are commonly regarded as representative, showing the highest standard of Hume scholarship. More importantly, all of them regard Hume's *Treatise* as a unified work, and attempt to show the consistency of the three Books in a respectively unique manner.

(a) Pall Ardal

Pall Ardal's *Passion and Value in Hume's Treatise* (1966) is regarded as a watershed work in the history of Hume commentary. His achievement can be summed up quite

straightforwardly; it is to explore the significance of Book 2 for Hume's moral theory that is thematically developed in Book 3. Ardal says that

> In Books 2 and 3, the main doctrine of Book 1 are indeed presupposed, but the two later Books have a peculiar unity, in that both deal with the active or 'passionate' side of human nature rather than the understanding. (Ardal, 1966: 4)

Ardal has been highly credited for discussing very clearly the connection between Hume's theory of passion and that of morals. Ardal asserts that Hume's moral sentiments are indirect passions of love and hatred. His theory served to create a new trend of the discussion of the classification of Humean passions; the crossword like puzzling between the simple and complex impressions, and the direct, indirect, calm and violent passions (cf. Loeb, 1977). Direct passions are those that originate from natural bodily reactions like hunger, anger, lust etc., and the indirect passions are pride, humility, love and hate that are created via the mechanism of sympathy.

The problem was to clarify the nature of the most important passion of the moral sentiment in Hume. For some time after Ardal's book, there were active disputes regarding the allocation of moral sentiments in the above classification. The problem was complicated because Hume's more explicit definition of the moral sentiment is only that it is a peculiar sentiment. Ardal had stayed in the centre of the controversy by insisting on a very clear stance that the moral sentiment is an indirect passion of love and hatred (Ardal, 1977). However, in the mean time, the controversy itself seemed to have vanished. It was not because Ardal's theory was decisive but, as I see it, there is not much real philosophical attraction in the controversy.

Although there are many things that can be learned from his book, I have a fundamental disagreement with Ardal's basic understanding of Hume's idea of moral sentiment. It is fundamentally misleading to try to understand Hume's moral sentiment exclusively in connection to Hume's theory of passions, because, for Hume, morality is not primarily a matter of passion. It is a matter of perception including (but not exclusively) passions. Ardal does not seem to doubt the separation of understanding and passion. According to him, morals are classified as a topic related

more to passion, than to understanding. However, this dichotomy is wrong, because morality is concerned with the entire human realm that includes understanding. All the books of the *Treatise* deal with human perceptions as the basis of beliefs. Although Ardal says Book 1 is "presupposed" in the discussion of the Books 2 and 3, he does not explain in what sense this is so (Ardal, 1966: 4). I think this is the very thing that should clearly be explained in detail.

It is true that Hume thinks that moral impressions can have an emotional aspect that can be called love or hatred. However, love and hatred are not the same as moral perceptions, because they represent an emotional state of an observer, and do not represent the quality of moral object. It is the latter that Hume's moral perception is primarily alleged to represent. It is important to note that Hume's method is to replace a substance-centred system with a relation-centred one. In his moral theory, Hume's concern is to analyse the mechanism how morality can be conceived as a relation-centred system. Love and hatred are an attitude of an agent. If moral sentiments are essentially love and hatred, morality cannot be the formative force of the new order of society. Ardal fails to notice that Hume emphasises that the peculiarity of moral sentiments lies in the manner in which they are conceived, and not in any content. My understanding is that the manner signifies the sense of generality. So long as they are perceived from the general point of view any sentiments, be it sorrow, joy, anger, *etc.*, can be a moral perception.

Ardal scarcely discusses the concept of the general point of view, because he fails to notice the significance of the generality of perception in morality. Also in his explanation of justice, he discusses exclusively the virtue of justice, but cannot explain how the moral sentiment realises the order of society through the three laws of justice and the allegiance of government. By identifying moral sentiments with love and hatred, Ardal loses sight of the dimension of morality that concerns the development of social institutions beyond individual intention. We need to see the moral sentiments centring on the concept of the general point of view to understand how moral sentiments can sustain the system of justice.

I think that the relation of Book 1 to the whole *Treatise* is more important than the relation between Books 2 and 3. Rather than founding morality on passion, Hume's intention is to moralise the passions. Ardal's argument reveals discrepancies because he does not discuss the epistemological role of moral impression. For example, regarding objectivity of moral evaluation, he says 'To judge a situation objectively is an acquired habit.' (Ardal, 1966: 118) But he does not explain what objectivity means in Hume or how we can make objective judgement with love and hatred. Ardal does not discuss the connection between causation or external object and moral sentiments, because he does not find any consistent principle among them.

Hume discussed so extensively human passion because human passion is a principle of realising sociability. Hume's theory of passion explains communication and mutual understanding. The most significant function of passion is to produce social evaluation through possessions. In this way, passion creates the idea of self and others. It is more important to understand Hume's theory of passion as the principle creating the system of property, and ultimately the civil society.

(b) Annette Baier

Annette Baier's *The Progress of Sentiments* (1991) is among the essential commentaries that cover the whole *Treatise*. Baier's work like my dissertation is an attempt to prove a consistency of the *Treatise* as a unified and coherent work. I regard highly her attempt to show the unification of Hume's *Treatise*, but I must dispute her fundamental idea of taking reason as the unifying concept.

Baier maintains that reason is conferred a different working in accordance with the different stages of the *Treatise*. However, in my understanding, the relationship between sentiments and reason is persistent throughout the *Treatise*. Reason is subordinate to sentiments in all stages in the *Treatise*. I agree with her that the chapters in the *Treatise* represent continuity rather than dealing with independent and unrelated topics. But I do not agree with her that "reflection" is the driving force that carries forward the progress of sentiments. Baier maintains that the *Treatise* should be read as exhibiting a progress of thought and sentiment (Baier, 1991: viii). She thinks that Hume's method and approach in the *Treatise* involves a process of

continually correcting, amending and expanding on the principles and positions that he has already taken up (Baier, 1991: 158). Most characteristically, she claims that causal belief is acquired through the "successful reflectivity" (Baier, 1991: 99). She holds that "all necessity derives from normative necessity, and all the norms available to us are our human norms, the product of our reflection" (Baier, 1991: 100). It is true, as Baier says, that we can discover the normativity of causation by careful observation. But unlike her understanding, Hume's point is that normativity is known not because the observation is careful, but because experiences create custom. Baier makes the reflectivity-claim based on Hume's remark that "there is but one kind of *necessity*, as there is but one kind of cause, and that the common distinction betwixt *moral* and *physical* necessity is without any foundation in nature. (T 1.3.14.33; SBN 171)" Hume clarifies that moral necessity and physical necessity are fundamentally the same. Therefore, Baier understands that causal necessity, as well as moral, is a product of reflection. However, contrary to her understanding, we should learn from this passage that moral necessity is not a product of reflection, but equally the product of custom.

Baier takes up the concluding part of Book 1 of the *Treatise*, and claims that Hume takes a philosophical "turn" which sends the reader in an entirely different direction in Books 2 and 3. The turn allegedly involves a move away from the solitary intellectualist reason of an isolated Cartesian intellect to the direction of a more passionate and sociable successor (Baier, 1991: 21, 285). Hume begins the *Treatise* by showing the fundamental limitations of rationalist reason. This is done in order to lay the foundation for the "crucial Humean turn, from intellect to feeling" (Baier, 1991: 20). This means reason is transformed into "active, socialized reason" as guided by our calm moral sentiments (Baier, 1991: 288). For Hume, Baier argues, it is "nonsense to see reason and passion as potentially opposed combatants" (Baier, 1991: 160). Baier's interpretation attempts to show that Hume's philosophy is concerned to bring these elements of human life together – he seeks to "unite feeling and thought" (Baier, 1991: 181). Rationalist reason, unguided by passion and sentiment, brings human beings to a condition of melancholy and despair. But, Baier says, this is not where Hume's philosophy leaves us. On the contrary, with reason

"reconstituted" in the way described, we are left without "any hint of melancholy" (Baier, 1991: 285).

I agree with Baier's basic claim that the *Treatise* should be read as exhibiting a progress of thought and sentiment. She argues the consistency of Hume's project by finding Humean reason more refined and sophisticated at each stage. It is true that Hume's approach in the *Treatise* involves a process of continually correcting, amending and expanding on the principles and positions that he has already taken up. This is why Hume claims that his work "will acquire new force as it advances" (T 3.1.1.1; SBN 455). But the problem is that Baier takes it that the "new force" means reason increases the power of reflectivity of reason.

In my opinion, Hume presents a different theory from what Baier takes to be the refinement of reason. I take it to be the development of the general point of view. It is Hume's consistent method to inquire which human faculty produces the impressions of "cause", "external objects", and "justice" --- reason, sense, or imagination. His answer is always "imagination", and not "reason"; imagination represents the working of custom which associates new impression with similar past impressions to produce a new belief. Therefore, it is clearly misleading that Baier asserts that reason refines as the *Treatise* progresses.

Contrary to her argumentation, Hume recognises the limitation of reason, and as the result he relies more on the working of feeling and custom. It is strange to think that "reason" develops, though Baier implies reflectivity by it. Baier seems to underestimate the significant role of the Humean custom. Reason works only in a fixed manner and does not literally develop. On the other hand, custom is suited to be understood as something that develops; it begins from a particular new action, which when repeated, becomes natural and changes spontaneously. Therefore, it is more appropriate to say that custom rather than reason develops.

Baier persistently contends that Hume's project all alone has not been so much to dethrone reason as to enlarge our conception to it, to make it social and passionate reason. Baier asserts that there is an element of certainty and reliability in Books 2 and 3 that were not found in Book 1. But, my understanding is that the certainty and reliability is presented in Book 1 whose task is to show how the sense

of validity and reliability emerges not from reason but from the working of custom. Hume's theory of causation and external object provide an explanation of the valid and reliable belief without resorting to reason. Usually, what is reasonable is taken to be valid and reliable. But Hume attempts to reverse this picture. Hume thinks that truth can only be what is trustworthy and reliable. This is the Humean turn for which Hume prepared the general point of view as the concurrent point of moral recognitions. According to Hume, reason cannot detect what is valid or reliable without consulting experiences; we obtain a stable view of the world not though reason, but through custom. It is not because reason is defective, but because the perceptions that we obtain through experiences are the only medium for our interaction with the world.

Baier holds that by seeing ourselves as others see us, we acquire a better understanding of ourselves. She holds that this is a working of reason. But in Hume, the influence of reason is secondary to that of custom also in moral judgement. Baier considers that it is crucial to Hume's moral system that we are capable of taking up "a special and especially "steady and general" point of view" (Baier, 1991: 190), from which we are able to articulate and share our moral evaluations with each other. Baier thinks that the general standpoint is to "look for common features, ones for which we have coined names in our moral language", and "is different from that of a lover, whose "object" is a concrete unique person" (Baier, 1991: 191). Baier like most other commentators does not explore the concept of the moral viewpoint, and takes it for granted that it rests on commonality.

To sum up, my challenge to Baier's interpretation is that what she implies by the concept of "enlarged" and "refined" reason can be more consistently described by the concept of the general point of view. Baier claims that "[c]entral to a proper understanding of the role of reason in human life is an understanding of the social context of reason and the way that it depends on human passion". This "reason" is realised by the function of the general point of view. Baier's new reason is not Hume's reason. Her "reason" should be replaced by the general point of view so as to reveal the consistency of the *Treatise* in a more illuminating manner.

(c) Donald Livingston

Donald Livingston's *Philosophical Melancholy and Delirium* is a highly original work that exceeds in its nature the scope of Hume commentary (Kail, 2001a, Frasca-Spada, 2001). Livingston's intention is to clarify the very fundamental nature of Hume's philosophy and its method. He thinks that the most noteworthy attempt of Humean philosophy is to attain self-knowledge. By this he means that Hume's philosophy presents the unified view of history, politics, religion, ethics and literature. All of them, together with other disciplines, compose the science of man.

First of all, Livingston tries to read Hume's work as a methodology of philosophy. Livingston tries to explore Hume's work as a dialectic between custom and reflection. Livingston's first claim is that Hume's is not an empiricist; Book 1 of *Treatise* is not an epistemological theory of knowledge on the sure foundations of sense experience, and instead Hume offers dialectic between reason and custom. The task comprises two stages. The first is to refute the reason-based philosophies which are called false philosophies, and this appears to be a sceptical argument of reason. The second stage is brought about through reaction to the first one. It is to return to the custom.

According to Livingston, Hume sees the philosophical act composed of three principles; Ultimacy, Autonomy and Dominion. The Principle of Ultimacy is that the end of philosophy is an understanding that is final, absolute and unconditional. The Principle of Autonomy is that philosophy is free of custom and prejudice, and is a self-justifying enquiry (cf. Livingston, 1984: Ch. 1). The Principle of Dominion is that one must regard the end product of philosophical reflection as ultimate and exclusively correct. Hume claims that these are neither consistent with each other nor with human nature. What the passages in the Book 1, part 4 shows is that the Autonomy Principle must be abandoned, for it is neither possible nor desirable. Philosophy is instead to be nothing but a more regular and methodical operation of the custom of common life. Through this recognition, we can enter the world of custom with confidence.

Livingston seems to make a crucial point by proposing "custom" as the key concept that takes the place of reason that is most fitted to the three concepts. In the same spirit as Livingston, I maintain that custom, and not reason, is the best and only candidate that is ultimate, autonomous, and dominant in their true form. First, custom is ultimate in the sense it is the judge of nature. It is custom that reveals the falsity of any other principle. Secondly, custom is ultimate in that it requires nothing other than itself to exist and develop. And thirdly, custom is dominant because everything in the long term eventually yields to custom. As the most fundamental principle of true philosophy, custom is involved in every meaningful human activity, most of all in epistemology and morality. In epistemology, custom is what refers a particular perception to a class that is comprised by its similar kinds. My additional claim that I submit beyond Livingstone's discussion is that custom, in so far as it concerns human reflection, is embodied by 'the general point of view' that attains the synthesis of the particular and the general.

My understanding diverges more radically from Livingston in the interpretation of custom in moral matters. Livingston treats custom as common practice, or an established social norm. But I think that Humean custom should be seen as a principle that produces order and stability rather than as any established social norm. As Livingston emphasises, Hume reaches custom as the philosophical principle through the rout of scepticism of reason. At this point, custom is not an ordinary concept any more. It has to be understood via the concept of the general point of view to as the central element of Hume's explanation of the creation of human nature. Unless we take custom as an epistemological concept, it does not function as the counter-part of reason. What is worse, it may plunge into a mere political ideology without philosophy.[265] When Hume argues that the stability of property occasions the rules of justice in the state of nature where there is no government, no civil society yet, Hume's theory is about how the moral concepts such as right, freedom, obligation come into being in the first place with the

[265] The questionable aspect of this is shown in his discussion of secessionism in his *Philosophical Melancholy and Delirium*. Livingston takes Hume's conservatism not as a philosophical but as a political principle, presumably because he does not find the underlying principle in "common life".

emergence of property. Hume has nothing to do with the political conservatism of our time.

Livingston takes up the example of the dialectic of the external object. The "vulgar" view is useful and pleasant, though wrong, while that of reason is destructive. I agree with Livingston in his emphasis of the importance of custom, but I think that Hume's point is to explore custom as an epistemological concept that represents the general point of view rather than to make custom combat with reason as a blind force.

It makes sense to consider to whom Hume addresses himself in the *Treatise*. Hobbes dedicates his *Leviathan* to "Mr Francis Godolphin of Godolphin" (*Leviathan* 3), Locke addresses his *Essay* to "Thomas, Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery" (*Essay* 3). More significantly, Locke devoted his *Two Treatises* to no particular person. These are certainly related to the fundamental intention and characteristic of their work. Livingston argues that Hume's philosophy is a unique project of self-knowledge. Livingston might think that Hume wrote the *Treatise* for himself to cure himself of the philosophical melancholy and delirium. Livingston maintains that self-knowledge is the goal of philosophy and the standard of philosophical truth (Livingston, 1998: 11). Inquiry into all objects will not terminate unless it attains self-knowledge. Hume first denies the substantial existence of self. Perceptions are everything that composes the human world; to know our physical circumstances, our psychological components, human relationship, society, government, and God. These are all based on perceptions as the basic material that, according to Livingston, composes the self-knowledge.

However, different from Livingston's unique reading, Hume's philosophy is not private and more open to the public. I am tempted to think that Hume's theory is more fundamentally addressed to society. The last sentence of the "Advertisement to the Treatise" reads: "*The approbation of the public I consider as the greatest reward of my labours; but am determin'd to regard its judgment, whatever it be, as my best instruction.* (T xii; SBN 2)" It is amazing that Hume, true to his word, decomposed the marvellous system of the *Treatise*, and catered to the taste of "*the public*" in his

later publication of the *Enquiries*.[266] This is because I regard the general point of view as the key concept that characterises Hume's intention of the *Treatise*. The general point of view is the perspective of the society rather than the perspective of self-knowledge. Most decidedly, the general point of view is the perspective of conscience as the public perspective emerged through individual perception. Hume describes how individuals are created out of the interaction with other people, and how individuals obtain freedom through the system of justice. Therefore, Hume's philosophy is oriented toward the realisation of the principle of society that includes self-knowledge. Livingston's self-knowledge is different from the liberal value that characterises Hume's ideal of sophisticated civilised society. This is because Livingston does not note the more concrete moral significance of Hume's epistemology in relation to the concept of custom.

2. *SUB SPECIE GENERALI*

Hume asks his friend in order to better understand the manuscript of the *Treatise*:

> … to read once over le Recherche de la Verité of Pere Malebranche, the Principle of Human Knowledge by Dr Berkeley, some of the more metaphysical Articles of Bailes Dictionary; such as those [of] Zeno, & Spinoza. Des-Cartes Meditations would also be useful but don't know if you will find it easily among your Acquaintances. These Books will make you easily comprehend the metaphysical Parts of my Reasoning …[267]

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[266] Even if he had known that his *Treatise* would be more appreciated some two hundred years later, for his moral purpose it was critically important to hasten this process. In this sense, the *Enquiries* are Hume's own exegesis of the practical thought, rather than the logic, of the *Treatise*, and this is evidenced by the fact that Hume does not boast of any new discovery in the *Enquiry*. John Rawls regrets seeing Hume deny the *Treatise* (see Rawls, 2000: 102). However, this seems to reflect Hume's consciousness of his role as an opinion leader of his time. In accordance with this, Hume rephrases the "general point of view" with "the common point of view", "a point of view, common to him with others" and the "principle of humanity". In this way, Hume returned to the "cave" to enlighten the people and the place. See footnote 227.

[267] Letter from Hume to his old friend Michael Ramsay of Mungale who was to read the manuscript of the *Treatise*, on 26 August 1737 (see Mossner, 1980: 104).

Among them, Spinoza appears six times by name in the *Treatise*, and is spiritedly discussed.[268] It is hardly conceivable that Hume did not have in mind Spinoza's cliché: "*SUB SPECIE AETERNITATIS*" when he employs the phrase of the "general point of view". This is further evidence that the concept of general point of view has a substance in Hume's thought. As Hume inherits some of his naturalism from Spinoza, he transforms it as based on human nature rather than pantheism, which corresponds to his alternation of Spinoza's eternal perspective into the general perspective.

In this dissertation, I have extensively explored the general point of view in Hume's *Treatise*. In order for it to be the general point of view, it has to be concerned with the entire argument of the *Treatise*. Thus the general point of view has a manner of emerging naturally so long as the *Treatise* has a consistent principle. Now, let me summarise the central concept of this dissertation to conclude. Part 3 of Book 3 of the *Treatise* is titled "Of the other virtues and vices". After explaining the establishment of government, and the rules and virtues concerning it, Hume devotes most of the last part of the *Treatise* to the discussion of "natural virtues". And it is there that Hume more frequently uses the notion of the "general point of view" or its equivalents. Upon the argument we have had so far, I hope it is now clear what Hume means by taking up the general point of view in making moral judgement. And with it, the Humean sense of morality has been now clarified. Morality is to create a stable relation with one's human and social circumstances, based on the model we have acquired by our physical circumstance. The general point of view provides the perceptions that make us believe in the qualities with which we must deal to create stability. Human beings have been trained by nature to take the general point of view and follow the beliefs produced from it.

On the other hand, it is true that the general point of view tends to be obscure and even disappears. This has to do with the fundamental nature of morality.[269] Moral consciousness is best when it disappears into the background, because morality produces the framework, good conditions of human activities, and

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[268] Even Locke is referred to by name only four times in the *Treatise*. It is established that Hume owes much to Spinoza (see McShea, 1968: 8; Baier, 1993b).

is not itself the final aim of human activities. In this sense, Hume understands that politics is extremely at risk when it relies on the personal virtue of the sovereign. There is not much sense in morality for the sake of morality, not because morality is unimportant but because morality is concerned with every activity of human beings. Hume presents human beings as moral beings in the more comprehensive sense than Locke or Hutcheson conceived it. Custom has a characteristic of losing its presence from our consciousness, once it incorporates the relation between self and surroundings into our mind. In a similar sense, where there is no moral problem or conflict, there is no moral consciousness. Significantly, this is a condition of our free activities. Freed from thinking of constraints on our condition of living, human beings can concentrate their attention on their own productive activities.

It is possible to indicate another normative aspect of Hume's general point of view, that it defines the condition of liberty. Hume clearly conceives the problem of liberty as a counter concept of necessity. As there is no impression of liberty, liberty has to be understood as a manner of perceiving the behaviour of other people. It is common to connect liberty with the concept of responsibility. People praise or blame others as the agent (cause) of the action perceived. Therefore, liberty is understood as the condition in which one's action is regarded as representing his own character from the general point of view. Hume says,

> It will be equally easy to prove, and for the same arguments, that *liberty*, according to that definition above mentioned, in which all men agree, is also essential to morality, and that no human actions, where it is wanting, are susceptible of any moral qualities, or can be the objects either of approbation or dislike. For as actions are objects of our moral sentiment, so far only as they are indications of the internal character, passions, and affections; it is impossible that they can give rise either to praise or blame, where they proceed not from these principles, but are derived altogether from external violence. (EHU 8.31; SBN 99)

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[269] M. Baron seems to suggest this idea from a different direction (Baron, 1995: 139-55).

Here is seen Hume's definition of political liberty. Political liberty can be defined as a condition in which people can exert their own moral character. Recognition of the character of a person is possible only if the effect of the action of the person is recognised from the general point of view as not forced by any external influence. Thus, the problem of personal freedom is reduced to the political condition in which each person can exhibit his character. In this way, Hume shifts the problem of liberty from the quality of an agent to the social condition in which each can exerts his character through his activities. Rather than presupposing the free individuals from the beginning, Hume's general point of view serves to produce free individuals. This is a ramification of his criticism of the social contract theory.

Comparison of Hobbes, Locke, and Hume has spelled out the characteristic of their thought about the origin of political authority. Very tersely, though Hobbes seeks it in desire, and Locke seeks in reason, Hume seeks it in custom. It is possible to characterise their theories by the viewpoint upon which they are based. Hobbes as a material nominalist admits only the point of view of individuals. Locke as a conceptualist attempts to view things from the point of view of reason. Hume's point of view is based on custom which represents no specific, nor any universal, point of view. It is the general point of view.

It is mistaken to think that Hume blindly approves custom and convention by his conservative position. On the contrary, Hume's task is to clarify the normative nature of custom, and to elucidate the standard to distinguish false custom from true custom, and to distinguish true belief from false belief. This is why he argued the essence of custom consists in the general point of view from the beginning of his exposition. The normativity of custom can only be guaranteed when it is supported by the general point of view. Therefore, the general point of view comes prior to the custom. Custom, belief, and convention that cannot be supported by the general point of view are superstitions, caught in the matrix of enthusiasm and fanaticism. Hume's fundamental objective is to destroy those kinds of dangerous superstitions by replacing them with social scientific thought. Hume induces us to take the general point of view in moral judgement, rather than just to follow custom and convention. This is the true philosophy. How are we to distinguish true belief from false belief? Hume understands that only true belief can serve to explain reality; only true belief

can produce moral science. And normativity must be based on the true belief that is recognised as an explanation of reality. This is why Hume is persistently concerned with causation as the theory of belief. And his thought in fact serves as the matrix of the social science of the Scottish Enlightenment (cf. Wood, 2003).

Unless we clearly bear this point in mind, we will be inclined to take Hume as a mediocre conservative in moral matters. And this is why we need to read the *Treatise* from Book 1 as an order-creating moral theory. It is remarkable that Hume finishes the *Abstract* by designating the principles of association as "the cement of the universe" (T Appendix 35; SBN 662). Now we are allowed to take it in its fully normative interpretation: just as "matter" associates with matter to create a universe, human beings associate with each other to create a society.

Descartes argues that there must be something certain and unshakable in order to recognise order in the world (Descartes, 1984-5: vol. 2: 16). Hume, however, considers that that thing need not be an Archimedean point. The Humean point is not single and fixed but general and constructive. *SUB SPECIE GENERALI* --- Hume's *Treatise* shows that the world appears orderly under the general point of view, not because of the order inherent in the object, or designed by God, but because human beings can create the order in this world when we behave accordingly.[270] This is the Humean constructivism of perceptions.

Let me conclude this dissertation with Hume's remark from the *Enquires*. Hume confesses that:

> I know not whether the reader will readily apprehend this reasoning [of the idea of necessary connection]. I am afraid that, should I multiply words about it, or throw it into a greater variety of lights, it would only become more obscure and intricate. In all abstract reasoning, there is one point of view, which, if we can happily hit, we shall go farther towards illustrating the subject, than by all the eloquence and copious expression in the world. This point of view we

[270] Hume's concept of the general point of view appears to lead to Rousseau's "general will" in his *The Social Contract* (1762). They also both have Hobbes and Spinoza as common sources of their ideas. However, I only point this out, and leave more detailed discussion to other occasions.

> should endeavour to reach, and reserve the flowers of rhetoric for subjects which are more adapted to them. (EHU 7.30; SBN 79)

My dissertation has proposed that the general point of view is this "one point of view" in Hume's *Treatise*. Now we have two ways of reading Hume's whole *Treatise*. One is to read it centring on the concept of the general point of view, and the other is to read it without paying any attention to the general point of view except in a few passages. No one before this dissertation has ever attempted to read the *Treatise* in this way. I submit my reading treats the *Treatise* as an integrated theory of morality, which provides the principle of normativity for creating order and stability in society, realising human freedom, and bringing the fruits of industry and civilization.

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